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THE
Commonweal

Responsible Parenthood

A Special Issue

Bernard Häring
George W. Casey
Daniel Callahan
Louis Dupré
Thomas K. Burch
E. Schillebeeckx
L. Janssens
Richard A. McCormick, S.J.
Michael Novak

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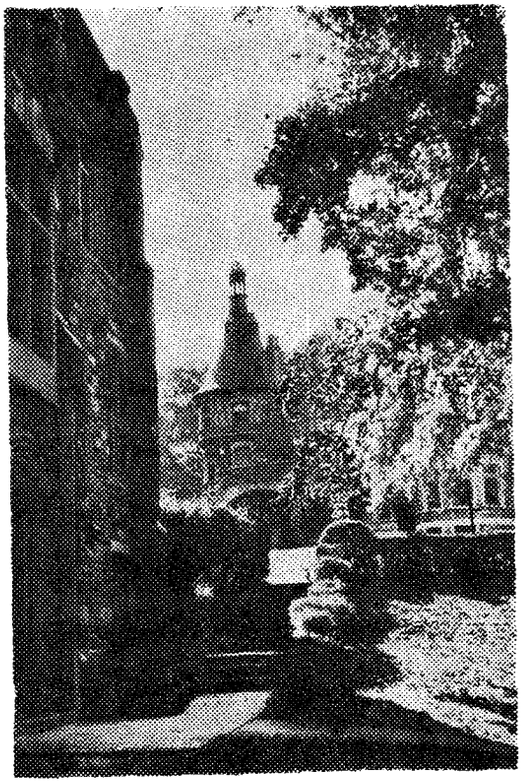

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Responsible Parenthood

IT WILL surprise no one to be told that the issue of responsible parenthood has become a crucial one for the contemporary Church. In part, history has brought this about. The world in which the Church now exists is not the same world which existed a century ago. Not only has the social character of life changed radically, but along with that change has come a marked shift in the moral consensus among non-Catholics. Though less dramatic, the Catholic moral consensus has also undergone a shift. No longer is the idea of birth limitation rejected out of hand.

What appeared self-evident even a decade or so ago may now appear highly problematical. Firm principles, new insights, and a spirit of freer inquiry jostle together in an unstable fashion, subject to intense heat one moment and extreme cold the next. To make sense of this volatile compound is a difficult and complex task.

It is a task which demands, for one thing, the employment of many different talents: those of the scientist, of the philosopher, of the demographer, of the statistician, of the casuist and the visionary, of the canonist and the anti-canonist, of the moral theologian, the biblical scholar and the aficionado of magisterial pronouncements. It also demands a variety of temperaments: those who will become indignant when basic principles are in danger of betrayal; those who will feel a sense of urgency to explore afresh when the same principles no longer appear adequate; those who will harshly shatter illusions and those who will pour oil on troubled waters. Hard-headed realists, romanticists, pragmatists, metaphysical system-builders—all of these are needed.

Given these varied requirements, it is simply too much to expect that any one person will meet them all. This is not, were it even conceivable, necessarily desirable. For the problem of responsible parenthood is one which profits from a wide range of perspectives.

The purpose of this special issue is to provide such a range. It presupposes a certain degree of familiarity with the traditional approaches, just as it also presupposes a general awareness of the existence of many raging controversies. But more than that it presupposes a willingness to listen to different points of view, to exercise one's Catholic reason, conscience and freedom. That means, in turn, a willingness to live with some uncertainty, confusion and muddy water. There are no short cuts.

THE ENGLISH hierarchy recently tried to find such a short cut, condemning out of hand any suggestion that anovulant pills could ever be accepted by the Church for purposes of family limitation. Perhaps in the long run they will turn out to have been right. But in the meantime the present state of theological flux on the issue would seem to make prudent silence the wiser course. As Father Bernard Haring was quoted in the *Manchester Guardian* as saying, "Surely we must make distinctions between these pills and other forms of contraceptives and I am sure there will be developments along that line in Catholic doctrine. I think the British bishops erred in their statement. . . . Responsible parenthood is what we are preaching today, and that is not the same as birth control."

There are other kinds of short cuts as well, some from the other end of the spectrum. Perhaps the most notable is the occasionally expressed desire that speculation all but cease and that the matter be left solely up to the dictates of the private conscience. In the end, to be sure, every individual must follow his conscience, but it is of little help to him to be told this if he is not given some indication of how his conscience might best be formed. One might call this extreme, taking a leaf from the civil rights struggle, the "states' rights" argument (both suffer from similar drawbacks).

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The greatest temptation to be avoided, then, is to hunger for a simple way out: either, on the one hand, by desiring that the Church once and for all speak and thus close off debate; or, on the other, by hoping that the Church will just forget the whole matter and let everyone, in effect, work things out for himself. The Church has already paid too heavily for the former impulse and would, in the long run, pay just as heavily for the latter.

The finding of a middle ground here entails many problems. One of these is that of responsible publishing, for it is primarily through the printed word that the issues are brought to focus, the debates carried on, and the information needed for intelligent understanding conveyed. Unfortunately, there are some who feel that the issues ought not to be touched at all other than by the very small core of professional moral theologians. Thus the layman who ventures into the arena is on occasion told he does not belong there, that his credentials are not in order. Such an attitude no longer makes much sense, if it ever did.

For the layman is responsible for what he does and for his conscience. He cannot be expected simply to sit silently by while his fate is debated behind closed doors or in the small print of specialized theological journals. His voice is needed, even if (and especially when) his approach is different from those attempting to establish norms for his conduct. No longer can the Church afford closed hearings when there are a host of prospective witnesses outside the door who have testimony of value. Those who complain of "irresponsible" laymen have for too long been defining "responsible" to fit their own preconceptions of what should be said.

AS NOTED above, the complexity of the responsible parenthood question is formidable for the general public. It is no less formidable for editors. For the sake of an orderly arrangement of the articles in this special issue, we therefore chose to begin the issue with the crucial matter of dialogue between the theologian and the layman. This task is confronted by Father Richard A. McCormick, S.J., of the theological faculty of the Jesuit seminary at West Baden, Indiana, who proposes a set of ground-rules for that dialogue.

His article is then followed by the reflections of Monsignor George W. Casey, a columnist for the Boston *Pilot* and pastor of St. Brigid's Church in Lexington, Mass., on the difficulties faced by the priest in trying to counsel married couples on birth control problems. Next, Daniel Callahan, an Associate Editor of The Commonweal and author of *The Mind of the Catholic Layman,* raises some questions concerning the self-image of the moral theologian and his relationship to the teaching authority of the Church.

Following those three articles, Father Bernard Haring, C. Ss.R., deals directly with the theology of responsible parenthood, setting forth some essential theological principles at stake. Father Haring, generally recognized as one of the Church's foremost moral theologians, teaches at the Academia Alfonsiana in Rome and is the author of *The Law of Christ.* His article is followed by an analysis of the relationship of the world population problem to that of responsible parenthood, the author of which is Dr. Thomas K. Burch, Director of the important Center for Population Research recently established at Georgetown University.

The last group of articles takes up some specific points of recent controversy. In an interview, Father E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., an important Dutch theologian and the author of *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God,* discusses the natural law and the need for approaching procreation in terms of human dignity. His interview is followed by an unofficial translation of a portion of a celebrated and controversial article by Canon L. Janssens of the theological faculty of Louvain. Though Canon Janssens' argument on "the pill" was rejected by many American theologians, it managed, nevertheless, to signal the existence of a school of theological opinion which has become increasingly important in recent months.

Next comes an article by Louis Dupre, associate professor of philosophy and theology at Georgetown University, which analyzes the tradition of marital morality springing from St. Augustine and then takes up some of the problems raised by Canon Janssens as well as by Father W. Van der Marck, O.P., a Dutch theologian who has also argued in favor of "the pill" for purposes of birth limitation The issue concludes with a review by Michael Novak, author of *The Open Church,* of three recent books on marriage.

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Laymen and Theologians

Toward a Dialogue

RICHARD A. McCORMICK, S.J.

THE WORD "dialogue" inevitably suggests disagreement, division, even "separated brethren." In this sense I suppose the word is far too strong for the shades of thinking within the Catholic community on problems of marital morality. Yet that there is in some quarters a glaring lack of consensus cannot be doubted. This manifests itself in different ways. At the theoretical level one occasionally encounters the type of rather muscular statement recently made by John Cogley in these pages [March 13] that "privately there is a general understanding that the theological writers frequently do not know what they are talking about." At the opposite extreme are the theologians who gruffly contend that non-professional readers frequently do not know what they are reading about. At the more practical level not a few married laymen believe that the priest just does not, even cannot, understand their problems. The priest, it is sometimes said, naively approaches the problems of the married with a quiverful of scholasticisms, a bookman's misplaced confidence in the rhythm, and an overall celibate psychology. The priest, on the other hand, feels that anything he does or says is indiscriminately doomed to be discarded as unrealistic until he sanctions contraceptives.

These reactions miss the mark, no doubt, by stating extremes. They gloss over completely the deep piety of the Catholic laity which yields nothing to the theologian in its pursuit of integrity of morals. They are silent about the intense anguish of the priest who realizes that he has no patented answer for these terrible problems, yet that his compassion can never relieve him of the occasionally burdensome task of being a moral teacher.

But even in extremes there is generally a grain of truth. And it is important to bring it calmly and maturely into the open. For unless this is done there can result a tug-of-war which is harmful to both theology and married living.

Where the theology of marital intimacy is concerned, the objectivity of the celibate priest has both great advantages and great disadvantages. Similarly, the intense personal involvement of the married couple has great advantages and great disadvantages. The difficulty of combining sound theology with a popular realism has led informed Catholic laymen to invite each other to speak up on marriage as they have come to know it. As a moral theologian I welcome this forthright invitation. Yet I fear that some may read it as an invitation to speak up as if they were theologians. Hence I believe it should be properly oriented—that is, toward a fruitful dialogue between theologian and informed layman.

In his excellent book *Love and Control* Cardinal Suenens wrote: "If every priest has a mission to instruct the faithful on these matters, it is the particular task of professors of ethics and moral theology to rethink the problems raised by sex education proportioned to the real difficulties met in modern life . . . Moralists cannot do this work successfully unless they also enlist the aid of the laity. Doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and even married people can be priceless sources of information."

While one must regret an order of seniority where mention of the married is almost an afterthought, the Cardinal's substantial point seems to be that what is necessary is a constant exchange of ideas. There has been dialogue already, of course; but if a sound morality and an acceptable formulation of it are to be guaranteed, this can only be the result of an even more intense dialogue leading to an even fuller grasp of the problem. To be fruitful this exchange must, I believe, have the following qualities.

First such an exchange must be *humble*. Just as the theologian must be willing to learn from married couples, so married couples must be open to guidance from the theologian. Such willingness to learn is possible only if the need to learn is openly admitted. The need to learn can only be experienced if one admits that theology is not marriage, and marriage is not theology. This realization will lead us honestly to admit that as individuals we do not have all the answers. At this point humility is but common sense. The humble admission that we need each other is simply indispensable. No one can realistically expect the married couple to be or become theologians. Similarly no one expects the priest to have an experimental knowledge of married life. Practically, then, this humility will demand that theologians admit that the gap between theological formulae and married living has not been successfully bridged, that their formulae have appeared not only

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unconvincing but even unrealistic at times. This means that the responsible theologian must constantly question the appropriateness, even the accuracy of his own formulations—a thing he does continuously in professional theological journals.

On the other hand it would console him to hear from the laity the frank admission that out-of-hand rejection of traditional theological formulations and conclusions (especially prohibitions) has often resulted from failure to take the arduous steps necessary to understand theological analyses, hence has proceeded from ignorance of their true content. As a psychologist, Robert Blair, said of the Ford-Kelly volume *Marriage Questions:* "It is . . . for the philosophically and theologically literate . . . The educated layman may find that the book requires many re-readings but the effort is well rewarded." Scientific theology is not everyone's dessert. Those who have thought so have often proved the contrary all too clearly.

Secondly the dialogue should be *patient*. There must be patience first of all with theological formulae and proofs. Theology is a science in the hands of human, stumbling, imperfect men. Like all sciences it attempts to get at the intelligible structure of things, then to formulate its findings in systematized generalizations. Indeed it is precisely this pursuit of the essential which both demands that theology rise above (but never away from) the concrete situation and gives it the appearance of abstractness, the more so where a dated scholastic terminology too often remains the vehicle of expression. Theological insight and formulation, then, never intended to present themselves as completely adequate to the reality they were describing. They could hardly do this and still remain theology. This is true of the moral analysis of human sexuality and the consequent proscription of contraception. Theology, as a science, must always suffer in this way. I believe that if we expect the scientific moral theology of marriage always to express the existential concreteness of the married situation we are making demands of theology beyond not only its competence but its intent.

Furthermore this science is in the hands of imperfect men. Insights come laboriously and with time. The theologian encases a reality in a tentative definition. Then a new experience opens his eyes and enlarges his understanding. He reformulates. A challenge is issued. He rejects it and through its rejection he learns still more. This is the theological struggle. Gratitude for advance becomes tenacity. Tenacity can easily become complacency. It is here that the honest theologian admits to the constant need of *vires a tergo*. Briefly, our work is never finished. This means, of course, that we have a great deal to learn about our own formulations and proofs. Theological, even papal statements are not an end to inquiry. They are rather a good beginning of understanding. Father John Courtney Murray, S.J., says of his summary of the teaching of Pope Pius XII on warfare: "The difficulty chiefly begins after this statement has been made." *(Theological Studies, 20 [1959], 53)* This remark is not a challenge to the Pontiff but to the theologian. Our answers will never be better than our questions. Indeed, anyone familiar with the theological writing on marriage will realize what profound developments have taken place since the issuance of *Casti Connubii.* The personal values of human sexuality are beginning to receive the attention they deserve. This is evident in the writings of outstanding theologians such as Duhamel, Häring, Lynch, Fuchs, Ford, Kelly and many others. We still have a long way to go and our outstanding theologians are the last to deny this.

If there must be patience with theological understanding, there must be patience, too, with the problems of married living, with the dilemma of which Mr. Michael Novak spoke when he wrote in a much-praised article (Commonweal, Feb. 14): ". . . many moral demands, of seemingly equal weight, are made on him at once." The ordinary sign of his vocational commitment (marital intimacy), his desire to plan the coming of his children responsibly, and his professional, financial or medical situation— reconciling these demands is the dilemma. The proscription of contraception does not solve this dilemma. Nor does it intend to. Because we have no rule-of-thumb answer adequate to all these claims means that we have a great deal to learn. It also means that we live in an imperfect world where suffering will always dog us. It does not imply, however, that the little we already know is erroneous.

There must be mutual patience at still another level. We are a human priesthood. Unfortunately there will always be in our midst the type of priest who will feel that he has answered a human problem by identifying something as sinful. When the unfortunate sufferer urges his back-to-the-wall situation, continued clerical insistence on a prohibition as if it were an answer will often appear to be and will often actually be stubbornly unreasoning, authoritarian and downright inhuman. Similarly, the theologian must be patient with the layman who, sometimes in righteously indignant reaction to such treatment, sometimes as a result of the enormous pressures of his dilemma, has become almost bitterly polemical, then ventured unprepared and unchaperoned into the perilous waters of theology. Exchange between such as these will produce rhetorical stereotypes, emotional salvos and, when the shouting is over, a sullen silence—the silence of intellectual stagnancy. Communication will have ceased. We all want answers, but answers which are adequate to the demands of sound morality and realistic married living. We are, in short, in the same Church and any dialogue must begin with this presumption and in this spirit.

Thirdly the dialogue must be *intelligent*. I mean by this two things. First of all, there is a matter of com-

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petence and limitations. While participants in this dialogue have much to learn from each other, intelligent due process demands a recognition of mutual competences. The theologian must trust the lay voice when it says that it finds theological formulae abstract and remote from married realities. He must learn to endorse fully the statements of the married couple who say that sexual expression does not fit simply into categories of control-indulgence, but is a matter of vocational commitment; that total abstinence (except in the most extraordinary cases) is in some sense unnatural to the married; that conjugal intimacy nourishes love and is a realistic demand of married living. On the other hand, the layman must try to understand or at least trust the theologian when he uses scientific phrases such as "procreative character," "direct temporary sterilization" and so on—trust that he is not being deliberately obscurantist or using arbitrary terms, but is trying to state a truth, that there is a meaning even though our formulae may not be the best and even though we do not understand all their implications.

This mutual trust is basically a mutual recognition of competence. The celibate theologian is not a married man and this will show. On the other hand informed married couples are not, *per se*, theologians and this will show. It is a most human temptation to forget these limitations, even to deny them. But their recognition is essential if the theology of marriage is to rise above the level of a dialogue exclusively between theologians or exclusively between suburban housewives.

This brings us to the matter of expectations. Excellent and well informed Catholic laymen complain that much theological writing on marriage does not reflect the experience of the married. It would be surprising to learn of a complete coincidence here. If dialogue is to be intelligent it must, in attempting to reduce these differences, realize the reason for their existence.

First of all, each marriage is a very unique thing. Each married couple lives an individual experience.

The ordinary couple is not often concerned with those things which are proper or common to marriage as such; they are concerned with their own marriage, their own financial problems, their own need of sexual expression. The uniqueness of their experience even makes generalization a very hazardous thing. The reactions, to cite but a single example, to Jane Hanover Adams' "Love, O Love, O Careful Love!" (*America*, Oct. 26, 1963) were as varied as possible. Some couples of my acquaintance condemned it as utterly unrealistic. Others praised it as "the good Catholic attitude." It is essential to realize that theologians are dealing with generalizations; married couples are living a unique experience. While the general should be rooted in a full grasp of many particulars, it need not reflect each one at an experimental level. Any priest who has dealt confidentially with married couples realizes that every marriage is different, enormously different from any other.

Secondly, the theologian speaks a language proper to his science. Realizing that words are to some extent a function of their context and that they become, by the jostling of everyday usuage, freighted with connotations, even at times contaminated, he takes refuge in a technical language which gives him the precision he needs. These phrases are theological jargon and as such they will probably never be experienced by married laymen or adequately describe something that is so experienced. While a formulation grasps a reality it does not always grasp and state a whole reality (and indeed does not always try to) or an experienced one. The lawyer speaks like a lawyer; the doctor like a doctor; the physicist like a physicist; the theologian like a theologian. To deplore this is either to forget the human condition or to regret the existence of specialists. The theologian, on the other hand, makes a mistake if he regards his work as finished although his formulations are meaningless to the married.

A striking example of this is the theological terminology *direct* and *indirect* abortion. Every moral theologian has spent hours attempting to justify this distinction and its crucial significance for morality. And every moral theologian has felt frustration at the rejection of this formulation as "a distinction without a difference," "semantics," even "pharisaic." The untrained all too easily assess moral acts exclusively by their effects and conclude that when a fetus dies, it's a death no matter how you calculate it. Yet in Mary Calderone's *Therapeutic Abortion in the United States*, a group of doctors, none of whom is a theologian, has implicitly affirmed this distinction (in a case of uterine fibroids) where the same distinction in theological language either is not grasped or is openly repudiated.

There are other reasons too why theological language might not describe something experienced by the married couple. We must never exclude the possibility

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that our formulations are at least partially inaccurate, deficient, and unrealistic. We are in need of a good phenomenology of married life. Dialogue promises much here. Furthermore, must we not also reckon with the fact that not a few marriages are unhappy ones? Finally we must recognize the fact that theological literature is often describing an ideal situation whereas marriages are dynamic processes which grope toward an ideal. Pope Pius XI wrote beautifully on the priesthood in his encyclical *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*. But many of us find it difficult to recognize our own image in these writings.

Fourthly, the dialogue must be *Catholic*. I mean that both theologian and informed layman start with several presumptions. First, that Christ has committed the integrity of morals to His Church and promised the Church aid and protection in carrying out this commission. As Pius XII wrote in his radio message on "The Christian Conscience as an Object of Education": "But where can both educator and the one educated find the Christian moral law with ease and certitude? In the law of the Creator, engraved in the heart of every man, and in revelation, that is, in all the truths and precepts that the Divine Master taught. Both of these—the natural law written in the heart and the truths and precepts of supernatural revelation—Jesus, our Redeemer gave to His Church as the moral treasure of humanity in order that she might preach them to all creatures, explain them and hand them on intact and safeguarded from all contamination and error from one generation to another." This does not mean that every pronouncement of the Catholic Church on moral matters is formally infallible. Nor does it mean that these teachings are to be received simply "from above, on the word of authority" as impositions. Nor does it necessarily mean that this teaching is as good as its proofs. It means first that the Church enjoys certain presumptions based on her commission to teach. It also means that an alert and humble reception of her statements can occasion a truly personal and creative reflection leading to growth in understanding. Naturally many problems remain. But these problems do not negate the original presumption.

A second presumption which must structure any dialogue which hopes to remain Catholic is the fact that the Church has taken (and in our day) a strong moral position on contraceptive practices. A study of her history would probably reveal that her stand here is as strong as it has been on any moral matter. To ignore this, pretend that it did not exist, treat it as a matter of simple canonical jurisprudence, or to regret the position as an unfortunate error is to play the ostrich both theologically and maritally. As already noted this moral position of the Church does not solve the problems of conjugal intimacy; rather more truly it states and highlights them, and that from a single point of view (the moral), and from a single moral point of view (that of prohibition). The incompleteness here is obvious. Furthermore the position has not been elaborated and formulated with complete satisfaction by theologians. Clearly much work remains to be done about what has been said and what has not been said. But the homework still remaining does not obscure the basic premise. The teaching is there, not as a matter of counsel or opinion, but as a matter whose practical acceptance binds in conscience.

The third presumption is that the authentic teaching voice of the Church has based this moral on natural law. To state these presumptions is not to indulge in low-level authoritarianism nor to ask couples to acquiesce in the slogan "he who belongs to the club keeps the rules of the club." It is to situate our reflections in an existential fullness. If one begins discussion of the dilemmas of modern marriage by prescinding from these basic presumptions, the Catholic context is gone.

Finally, the dialogue must be *prudent*. Here I must speak with utter candor. There are certain dangers associated with "opening up a problem." I mean that it too frequently happens that when well-founded doubt is cast on the validity of a particular formula or proof, or when new facts lead theologians to nuance a definition or a conclusion, there are many who are unprepared to tolerate this. For them it means the whole teaching has been unanchored and is "up for grabs." This will understandably lead the theologian to be extremely careful of the way in which he discusses his own real difficulties. There are assuredly many imperfections in our grasp and formulation of conjugal morality; if the attempt to reformulate, to get a fuller picture, will be the occasion for irresponsible and hasty rejections of an overall moral position the attempt through dialogue will just never get under way.

The theologian must be honest; and he must be honest in public; above all he must be honest with those who have the greatest stake, even the fullest rights, in the discussion. Yet if one is to expect frank and open discussion from theologians outside of professional journals, there must be a great deal of maturity on the part of non-professional but informed lay Catholics. When many Catholics are already practicing contraception, when many others "wish a change in Church teaching" (cf. for example the recent Harris report), when a competent doctor but an incompetent theologian urges views which are at variance with Church teaching, the theologian is understandably wary about public discussion if this is likely to deepen the confusion he reads all about him.

I believe that some attempts at public theologizing (as distinguished from responsible discussion) have tended to choke off dialogue on these questions by scaring away sincere and honest theologians who rightly ask how many Catholics are prepared to distinguish

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calm, forward-looking, inter-disciplinary exchange from carping and amateurish debates. The only antidote to the theologian's legitimate fears is the intelligence and patience already mentioned. If abstract and technical formulations have provoked some of the laity to form their consciences independently of Church teaching, the appearance of the instant theologian, especially of the lobbyist variety, will inevitably stimulate the professional to drag his feet where dialogue is concerned.

Though Catholic teaching has not solved all the problems of conjugal intimacy, it continually exhorts us to pursue our search. A new sense of buoyancy and excitement quickens theological inquiry, not because we are on the verge of abandonment of the past, but because continuity with it is now better than ever seen as a matter of daily rediscovery. But as outmoded forms are being challenged and sloughed off, it is to be expected that among the voices heard (both lay and clerical) there will be those who, nourishing illusory hopes, venture beyond healthy progressiveness to rashness. Still others cling to traditional formulae as if they were exhaustive of timeless truths, or worse, as if they were truths. These are but the typically human manifestations of growth. Growth is always a dangerous process. But since grow we must, we dare not deal with the dangers by retirement. The penalty for theological retirement is a stagnation which eventually threatens the very values we retire to defend.

That there is a gap between scientific moral theology and everyday married living seems beyond question. This gap is not the only problem in the study of modern marital dilemmas. But it is certainly one of them. And it is certainly one of the bigger ones. And it is one which demands dialogue which is humble, patient, intelligent, Catholic and prudent.

Confessors and Theologians

The Pastoral Crisis

GEORGE W. CASEY

LET'S face it, the attitude of the men in the confessionals, hearing in detail the difficulties of complying with the prescriptions of the moral theologians; and the attitude of the pastor in his parlor, talking with honest young couples whom he has known from childhood does vary, with regard to the Catholic teaching on birth control, from that of the scholars who elaborate it.

The former are dealing with people whom they know by name and address, with whom they are emotionally involved, whose pain is their pain, while to the latter, all too often, a case is a case is a case in the explication of the law, and maybe an opportunity to display their expertise. In practice, if not in theory, there is often a conflict between the law and people which moves us in the pastoral ministry to pray for a way out.

I will say for myself that I first began to modify my adjectives in my sermons against birth control when, without bitterness or patent self-pity, a man told me that his wife had borne him nine tiny monstrosities in a row, who lived but a few weeks each. More of the fire went out when I handled the case of a poor hapless sort of mother who bore her fifth set of twins in as many years and her husband "took it on the lam," as they say. And I might add that I had to cope with the whole situation without the benefit of the many social agencies that are now available to bewildered young priests in the pastoral ministry. At that time such adjectives, with reference to those who saw no evil in birth control, as "filthy," "murderous," "animalistic," "sensual," etc. went out of my rhetorical vocabulary. I began to see that family planning was not in all cases sheer wickedness.

I am by no means pleading for situational ethics but do remember from my long distant studies in casuistry that circumstances do alter the morality of specific actions, in case of theft, violence, etc., and wonder why they have no relevance there at all.

Circumstances have changed. When Jehovah said "increase and multiply" the world was empty. When nature was raw and wild beasts prevailed, many men were needed to subdue the earth. In the long agricultural history of man, especially when war, pestilence and famine severely limited his numbers, large families were not only a necessity but an asset. Now with the earth filling up at a geometric ratio, one could almost feel that the divine injunction had been fulfilled, and that mission accomplished. Other urgencies might now take over.

The other foot on which Catholic teaching stands is the natural law, which has been given precise statement in Canon Law: "The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children." In our polemical zeal, it seems to me, we have over-emphasized the first mentioned obligation to the point of almost obliterating

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the second-mentioned obligation. It seems to have lost its moral force among us.

This, I contend, is purely adventitious. No one has challenged the obligation to the education of the children born to a given union. We have not been invited to battle on the point, no sectarian militancy has been provoked and so the obligation, a very grave one, has been scanted. I doubt very much if a decree of nullity of marriage could be secured on proven intent not to educate any children born of a given union but looking at the canon, it is hard to see why not. Both obligations seem to pertain to the essence of the contract.

At any rate, in our day, the emphasis on the stated obligations should be balanced. The raising of the children should not be left to inclination or natural love, which sometimes fails. The moral imperative needs new stress. The obligation to feed, clothe, shelter, educate and form the children of a family should be given some of the emotional resonance which has hitherto been reserved for breeding. This has not, however, been the thrust and emphasis of our moral teaching or parochial preaching. Even one of the most recent high school catechetical texts contains an example of pious sarcasm in a fictitious "Letter to an unborn son," in which parental selfishness and self-indulgence are the only possible motives given for family planning.

There is a new urgency to the proper education of children. It never was simple to prepare children to cope with the world they had to live in, but now it is more complicated than ever. Until now there was always a place for those who were willing to work, some use for whatever labor was offered. There were new frontiers and there was always agriculture. Now, not only because of the overcrowding of our planet, but more because of automation, the time is here when there is a growing, irreducible number of those who have no place in the economy. Unless youths are reasonably well educated today and given something to offer to the working world, they are quite apt to land in this pool of humanity which has no place and no purpose.

In addition to economic pressures there are new social and moral pressures. The new freedom of women, young and old, in dress, companionship and even occupation, invites temptation. Society, at least outwardly, used to be on the side of restraint and correct behavior. It no longer seems to be so. Even the schools have lost their ardor for respectability.

A few generations ago, the common people, working-class parents, could depend on much help from society in the moral formation of their children. Indeed, with twelve-hour days and six-day weeks of work for the father, not to speak of still longer days for cooking, scrubbing and darning for mothers, there was no other way. Now, with church, school and public opinion exercising less influence than ever before, more, much more of the parents' time and concern are demanded.

The wider spacing of children to meet these new demands has traditionally had some taint of guilt attached to it. Agreement with the parents on the part of a confessor or a Catholic family counsellor has usually been given grudgingly and reluctantly. It has been looked upon as a concession to the spirit of the time, the acceptance of a lesser good instead of the greater.

I am, of course, not hoping for a change in Catholic teaching in matters of procreation but a change in stress: more emphasis on education; a shift of some of the moral force and fervor of the Church from breeding to upbringing; a new challenge to Catholic parents to make sacrifices for quality as they have made them for quantity. And sacrificing numbers in the way demanded by Catholic teaching is no small sacrifice for any healthy and normal parents.

When parents come to the well-considered and conscientious conclusion that they do not have the financial, physical, spiritual and emotional resources to have any more children—or any more for a while—or when confessors and counsellors come to that opinion about a given couple, then they should be made to feel that not only are they to be permitted not to have any more children, but that they have a moral obligation not to have any more. The rights of the children already born should be vindicated as well as the right of a duly married couple to unlimited procreation.

If this seems contrary to the dear old Catholic tradition that large families are the best, and that you cannot have too many children, if it seems modern and avant-garde to the point of rashness, let me dig out a misty memory from the past and from the simple, very Catholic society in which I grew up. When it became clear to the old fashioned mothers that enough was enough (a dozen or so as often as not), and no more children could be countenanced, dad was resolutely thrust out of the bedroom and that was that. The books were closed. Mission fathers might rant about the awful temptations to which this subjected the hapless husband, and I was hearing confessions long enough ago to remember the protests of urgent men, but the good, sound mothers of the day, secure in the promptings of their own consciences and maybe a whisper from the Holy Spirit, held fast.

They were very loyal to Catholic teaching and very willing to do their share, but it did not seem to me that they admired as shining examples of Catholic motherhood those women who bore children to the end and let the devil take the hindmost.

IN FAMILY-PLANNING according to the Catholic tradition, the good, religious parents of today measure up to their predecessors in sheer self-control and iron will. It may be harder for them because they have come up through softer and easier days than their grandparents, and are less used to deprivation. Furthermore

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they know better than their elders what stark abstention does to them psychologically. This is not to say that many of the old-time fathers who repaired to the corner saloon for more than one did not know a little elemental psychology too. Today's parents can abstain if they have to, but they are wondering more than the old-timers why they have to. They are not as submissive and content to hear the celibate confessors' routine observation that God has special blessings for the large families, that He knows best and everything will come out right and besides Canon 1013 says so.

The Catholic knows that Catholic teaching is based on the natural law and that there is no going back of it, nor does he insist. But he also knows that this natural law was not written on tablets of stone nor spoken by Christ or the Apostles. It was extracted from philosophy and unfolded by right reason and the application of theological instinct to situations that arise. He wonders if the continuing influence of the Holy Spirit on the magisterium of the living Church may not bring new application, new interpretation, to absolutely new situations. It is hard for him to understand why the natural law must remain the only rigid and inflexible thing in an increasingly changing world.

Nature is profligate with seed. Infinitely more is produced than can ever take root and grow in the plant and animal kingdoms. Those that do take root and grow would soon overwhelm the area and resources of the planet if it were not for some mysterious balance nature establishes between reproduction and parasitism to keep them under control. It seems strange to many that the profligacy of human reproduction, now making itself so apparent everywhere, is exempted from conscious control.

As a pastor, however, it is not demographic problems that bother me, but the anguish, mental and physical as well as moral, that my people undergo in trying to keep the law that is presented to them as God's will, and at the same time in trying to rear their families in the standards of their peers. More so, much more so, am I bothered by the danger of death or crippling illness that some mothers encounter in every pregnancy, sometimes with no hope of normal offspring to warrant it. The inexorability of the law and the implacability of some experts who expound it seem almost heartless.

I pray that some way that may be in complete accord with true Catholic conscience, yet not the stark way of the total denial of the normal demands and delights of marital love, may be found for those caught between the desire to do God's will and the desire to serve those closest to them on earth.

The moral theologians insist that their sympathies for the couples caught in this dilemma are equal to those of the men in the pastoral ministry, but the way they move swiftly in, with their strictures and admonitions from bygone days on every proposition for relief, makes me wonder. They seldom have warm welcome for the physicians or scientists who come hopefully forward from their fields with proposed solutions for the problem.

However, to my very inexpert eye, that is the direction from which relief will come. The sociologists and the scientists, enabled to engage in research in the mysteries of fertility and reproduction by funds generously donated for the purpose, may in the providence of God come up with the answers that the theologians and the canon lawyers have not been able to find. We have praised the days of old without stint. We may have praise of a new order for the days and ways of the present.

The Cutting Edge of Renewal

Authority and the Theologian

DANIEL CALLAHAN

THE QUESTION of family limitation in the Church today may be likened to a drama, but one so rich in rhetoric and sub-themes that it is increasingly difficult for the audience to follow the plot. They are not to be blamed for their confusion. The play is constantly being rewritten, new scenes are added with increasing rapidity, and no one has yet been able to devise a satisfactory ending. The critics have not been helpful either. Some see only an old-fashioned morality play: faithful Catholics standing firm against the secularist hordes and their Catholic fellow-travellers. Others see it as a courtroom drama: the people vs. the minions of the law. Still others see it as a tragedy (though they are not always clear who the tragic hero is).

Well, of course all these elements are present on the stage, so each of the critics has a point. But I would like to suggest that the development of the play to date has gradually uncovered what may be the real and lasting issue at stake here: how authority in the Church is to be understood, interpreted and developed.

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For that is the one issue which seems most to determine the lines spoken by the actors. Whatever he may privately think, the layman is only likely to speak those lines which he believes are assigned him in the Church. Exactly the same thing can be said of the theologian. Now and then, of course, an errant line escapes from someone's lips (more today than ever); and some of the lines have a double-meaning. Even so, the stage curtain of authority hangs over everything: as a source of confidence for some, anxiety for others, and perhaps as a puzzle for most.

A convenient way to grasp the unfolding of this play is to begin with those changes which have marked the past decade or so. Up until about the middle of the fifties there was a remarkable harmony among the ideals of the magisterium, the theologians and the married laity. The large family was accepted as the norm of a Catholic marriage, even though it was formally recognized that medical, economic or other "indications" could justify, for "serious reasons," recourse to rhythm or abstinence. But these indications were clearly thought of as exceptions. All of this brought comparatively few objections from the laity, at least those who might be accounted "zealous" Catholics, or "nuclear" Catholics. Indeed, we are sometimes prone to forget today how the ideal of a large family was once seen by many to go hand-in-hand with the liturgical movement, social justice and contemporary spirituality.

Social realities, which arrived in a variety of forms, soon unbalanced this equilibrium. Catholics finally realized how much the Protestant consensus had changed, so much so that now family limitation (by the most efficient means) is taken to be a Christian duty. Then the population explosion began to be noticed by demographers, and the early efforts to dismiss their work as secularist propaganda made less and less sense. Of more immediate concern to Catholic parents, it turned out that American society is simply not geared for very large families; that fifteen-room Victorian houses are in short supply; that a family of six, eight or ten children requires an income well above the average; and that such an ideal, even if physically possible, takes little account of the emotional needs of the husband and wife, much less those of their children. A new perception of the importance of education, of the necessity that a wife be something more than a mother, and that a husband be something more than a bread-winner, helped to round out the change of perspective. Here lies one revolution.

No less important was the revolution beginning to gather impetus in the Church. Manual scholasticism, with its baggage of apodictic certainties, showed signs of an impending death. Personalism, existentialism, and the thought of the Church Fathers began to make more sense and to speak a more meaningful language. The Bible came into its own, not just as a book to be praised in the abstract, but as a living source of concepts, perspectives and spiritual animation. It too speaks a different language, a language which makes the old books of moral theology appear dangerously inadequate, if not altogether misleading. The Second Vatican Council pushed the revolution forward. To an extent which still remains undetermined, it has called into question many episodes in the Church's past. More importantly, it has cast doubt on many traditional ways of thinking about Catholic doctrine. It shattered old certainties. It showed that Catholics could think unthinkable thoughts (even if it has not made clear how far this can go). It brought the beginning of freedom in the Church—freedom of conscience, not just that old-time Catholic freedom, the freedom of perfect submission to every iota of the law.

ALL OF this amounts to a theological revolution, of which only the barest hint has shown itself in the Council. Yet all the while this revolution was in the making those I will call the "Center Party" moral theologians have remained firmly imbedded in the atmosphere of the past. In America, probably the finest fruit of the work of this party is *Contemporary Moral Theology*, Vol. 2: *Marriage Questions* (Newman, $7.50) by Fathers John C. Ford, S.J. and Gerald Kelly, S.J. Their work over many years, of which this and an earlier volume are the outcome, has provided American theologians with detailed and probing surveys of the whole spectrum of moral problems, both practical and theoretical. On the whole, they have steered a middle course between the arch-reactionaries and the pioneers (and thus have been attacked from both sides). For that reason, Fathers Ford and Kelly could be said to personify the center, and *Marriage Questions* to epitomize the thrust of its thinking.

The range of problems covered in *Marriage Questions* is broad, the treatment of them marked with precision and subtlety, and the criticism of those with whom they disagree eminently charitable and fair. Among other things, they sketch the development of Protestant thought on marriage, detail the problems posed for traditional theology by the emergence of a school of personalist theologians, present their own *via media* between the personalists and the canonists, and argue their own theory of the ends of marriage. Throughout the first half of their book Fathers Ford and Kelly are preoccupied (in a very illuminating way) with the relationship of the "primary" and the "secondary" ends of marriage. In the second half, they deal with more concrete problems: contraception, sterilization, "the pill", periodic continence and other matters. On the crucial question (at least in the popular mind) whether the Church can or is likely to change its teaching on the immorality of contraceptives they are forthright. "The Church," they write, "is so completely committed to

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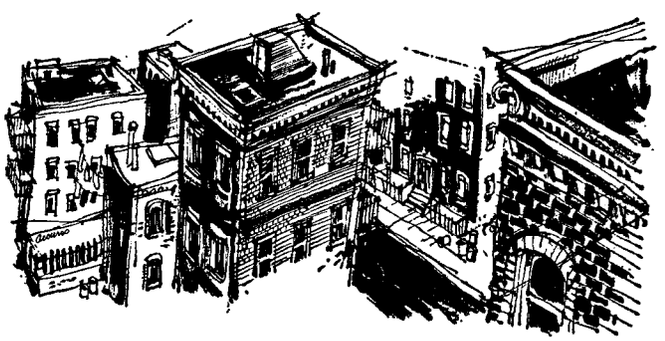
the doctrine that contraception is intrinsically and gravely immoral that no substantial change in this teaching is possible. It is *irrevocable*." Moreover, they think it "very likely" that the Church has taught this doctrine infallibly (a judgment, of course, disputed by other theologians).

WHEN SEEN in the light of the double revolution noted above, certain characteristics of Fathers Ford and Kelly's methods are at once apparent. One searches in vain for a heavy use of biblical texts (or even a light use). The primary proof-texts which they employ are papal encyclicals and allocutions and the comments and decisions of other organs of the magisterium. Next in importance are the writings of other moral theologians. The philosophical presuppositions and concepts (which loom large) are drawn almost exclusively from traditional scholastic terminology and that of the canon lawyers. There is only the barest hint that Fathers Ford and Kelly have been much swayed by the theological revolution in the Church.

At the same time, it is important to note, they are sensitive to the kinds of difficulties which confront married couples today. That they do not speak the ordinary language of the laity should by no means be held against them. There is much evidence implicit in the book that they understand this language, and, more than that, that they have heard their share (far more than most laymen) of the anguished cries of couples caught in acute moral dilemmas. That they do not speak in the vernacular themselves is beside the point: they were not writing sermons or popular manuals, but instead write as professional theologians for a professional audience.

In many ways, then, *Marriage Questions* is a model book, once care is taken to note the purposes, methods and presuppositions of the authors.

It is also a book which, like the theological tradition it represents, is years behind the revolution now in progress. Here lies the tension inherent in the book itself, a tension particularly visible in the authors' fear that a substantial change of Catholic teaching on licit methods of family limitation would have disastrous consequences for the Church's claim to teach with authority. It is in this sense that the Church's fidelity to its position takes on a symbolic value which goes far beyond the particular doctrines in question. If the Church changes here, then nothing is safe: that is the unveiled fear which Fathers Ford and Kelly (not to mention many others) cannot help but concede. If there is a theological revolution in progress in the Church generally, then this is one of those critical issues which, in the eyes of many, will mark the difference between doctrinal development and chaos. Fathers Ford and Kelly are wary of the former and abhor (rightly) the latter.



HARDLY LESS important as a source of tension is the way the authors seem to conceive of their tasks as theologians. The best analogy that comes to mind is that of government civil servants. There *is*, for one thing, little indulgence in personality in their book. Their tone is that of proper functionaries, ever shy of the first person, self-effacing to the point of psychological obliteration and totally awed in the face of what they take to be authoritative documents or pronouncements.

Now there is of course nothing traditionally wrong in such a stance: Seen in a less harsh light all of these characteristics bespeak genuine humility and wholly dedicated service to the magisterium of the Church. In other respects, however, it is far more difficult to adopt such a perspective. For it is one mark of the civil servant that he tries to cover up, or gloss over the weaknesses in the position laid down by the high command. He puts, in short, the best face on things he can, keeping as far as possible from the public eye the gaps, the inconsistencies and the uncertainties of the official policy. This he can do by skirting the hard questions put to him, or, if he is a loyally creative civil servant by inventing ingenious *ad hoc* arguments to cover all eventualities. Still another part played is that of devising a new rationale for an established policy when it has become clear that the old arguments in its favor are no longer adequate.

All of these tendencies are present in *Marriage Questions*, but are most prominent when the authors try to show the reasons behind the Church's rejection of contraception. They are, for instance, aware that the traditional natural law arguments no longer persuade many Catholics. To meet this situation, however, they do not wonder whether the position is defective, but instead conclude that better arguments have to be devised, and that it is the task of the theologian to devise them. Yet since they are also aware that the Church has rested its case heavily on the natural law, they have an inherent difficulty on their hands: How can the position be assumed correct if the reasons once taken to demonstrate it are now seen to be inadequate or incomplete? Their answer is not one to shed luster on the theological profession: "When the Church asserts that a truth is of natural law, she does not *ipso facto* become responsible for providing a convincing demon-

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stration of the truth based on arguments derived solely from reason." It is, they say, "the task of the theologians to elaborate these points." As for the embarrassment inherent in a recognition that the natural law arguments do not persuade, their response is to say that this perception shows the "moral necessity of a religious authority for an adequate knowledge of the natural law." As fast as one prop collapses, then, a new one is devised to take its place. And what are the married laity to do while this work of reconstruction goes forward? Hold fast, naturally, since "for Catholic living . . . internal conviction and external conformity is enough; it is not necessary to know why the Church teaches that contraception is intrinsically immoral." (Fair enough, if that is the way things must be: but if the theologians cannot demonstrate the cogency of the doctrine, why are they and the magisterium so certain that it is correct, much less "irreformable"? One is reminded here of the English philosopher who described the demise of an old philosophical doctrine as the result of a "death by a thousand qualifications.")

AT THIS POINT, let me say I am aware how harsh this way of approaching *Marriage Questions* and the work of Fathers Ford and Kelly sounds. Any portrayal of obviously dedicated, obviously committed and obviously sincere theologians as akin to loyal civil servants or faithful party workers is bound to appear offensive. It also has the effect of minimizing unduly their valuable insights. For that I am sorry. Yet it is helpful to take such a special vantage point, for it assists in explaining why the birth control question is such an unusually troubling one for the theory of authority in the Church. It has been urged, for instance, that dialogue between the theologians and the laity is essential. Indeed it is, but what good will that dialogue do if at the very outset the theologian conceives his task as that of defending, developing and rationalizing an "irreformable" doctrine?

How can the layman possibly trust the theologian if he suspects that the latter never speaks personally but always as the representative of higher authority? Who delimits the lines uttered by the theologian: his own Christian reason and his informed conscience or those he supports as an obedient, loyal servant? There is just no way of knowing. This is particularly true of published works by moral theologians since one knows that to win publication, they had to run a gauntlet of censors. It is also true, however, of face to face confrontations with theologians. There is nothing more painful than to watch a theologian think twice before he answers a direct question; to listen to him carefully and haltingly frame a precise answer which will not put him or the Church in an embarrassing position; to see him twitch and squirm while defending publicly a position which he (and everyone else) knows to be a weak one, or while devising a jerry-built "answer" to a pointed objection. To bring the pain to a fine point, one need only ask of the theologian: What do *you* think? There is little in his role as docile servant which prepares him to confront, much less bare in public, his personal beliefs. For him, they do not count. He is prone to camouflage his private opinions, his attitudes, his way of thinking. In extreme cases, he tries to act as if he does not even exist, or as if his mind is perfectly interchangeable with that of the magisterium. I conform; therefore I am. (Unfair? Yes, but not very.)

I would not want to suggest that such a self-image is incompatible with the creation of genuine theological advances. On the contrary, the numerous Center Party theologians have been responsible for much of the development of doctrine which has marked recent decades: the shift away from the large family norm, the taking seriously of the "secondary" ends of marriage, and the rejection of a purely legalistic approach to family limitation. But it is a self-image incompatible with some essential requirements in the present situation. It is, first of all, vital that the theologian understand not just where his predecessors went wrong, but why. Was it not, for example, a partially false conception of authority which led so many theologians for so many centuries never to wholly reject a tradition which saw any use of sex apart from procreation as dangerous if not sinful? It is just not enough to pass off the rejection of this position as the unfolding of "new insights" or a normal doctrinal development. For centuries a serious mistake was made, one which misled many people. Why? If the theologian sees himself only as a docile servant of an established doctrine, how can he avoid making the kinds of mistakes his predecessors have often made? He must, secondly, therefore explore afresh his relationship to the magisterium, asking himself and the magisterium whether his role has been so conceived as to endanger his integrity.

Third, it must be possible for the individual theologian to take, in public, a position counter to that of established teaching if his Catholic conscience and his scholarship so dictate. Otherwise, the layman will never have full confidence in the integrity of the theologian. So, too, the magisterium must allow this liberty to the theologian. Otherwise, it could never have confidence that he was not simply fawning on authority or that a purported theological consensus was the real one. Finally, the whole atmosphere supporting the enterprise of moral theology must encourage the theologian to be candid with himself, candid with his colleagues, candid with non-theologians, and candid with the magisterium.

THE BIRTH control question is, above all, a test case for the Church's understanding of itself and especially of its understanding of the development of doctrine. That means it is a test case for the contemporary re-

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newal of the Church. Its importance lies in the direct confrontation of the theological methods and inclinations of another generation with those now emerging. The reason, for instance, why the natural law arguments against contraception are so unpersuasive today does not stem from some suddenly discovered fallacy in one step of the argument. Nor does it stem from a rejection of one of the premises of the argument. Significant changes rarely take place in this way (though detailed critiques of old arguments normally accompany such changes and are necessary to help them along). They come about, rather, because of a radical shift of perspective, the development of a new group consciousness, the shaping of new conceptual and linguistic tools, and the impact of history and social circumstances. All of these forces are present within the Church today and present within that world of ours in which the Church exists. They are more than just "present": they are operating with a positive fury.

If there is a tragedy latent in this drama, then it lies in the desperation of good people trying to use old tools to cope with new material. It lies also in the desperation of married couples trying to relate old certainties to new uncertainties, holding on by their fingertips to a sandstone ledge they had been assured was made of granite. In each case, the natural inclination is to panic. That is a sensible response, but not the only one possible. A better one would be for the Church, in its teaching authority and in its members, to immerse itself in the present. No theologian today can be expected to be understood if he continues to argue that the primacy of the species takes precedence over the personal good of individuals. He will not be understood if he argues that biological values take precedence over personalist values. He will not be understood if he says that one must accept a doctrine or a law on the basis of authority alone. The problem is not that these things are necessarily wrong. They are incomprehensible, flying in the face of everything contemporary man has learned about himself, about his conscience, about nature and about value. They have been taught him by the Church as much as by the world. If the concept of a "living magisterium" has any meaning at all, then it must at least mean this: one way to remain faithful to the past is to affirm the present. That is the demand which our life here today has directed to the Church's exercise of its authority. That is the cutting edge of renewal.

Morality As Growth

Responsible Parenthood

BERNARD HARING

NO CATHOLIC theologian or pastor will deny that "responsible parenthood" involves more than mere biology, more than the merely technical question of the means of regulating births. But this "more" is just what is often lost sight of. In the manuals of moral theology and in pastoral practice, it is a typically underdeveloped area.

Certain archconservative casuists of the past worked out an almost mechanically perfect system whereby what was to be considered mortal or venial sin in conjugal life was differentiated from what was not sinful. The system allowed one to draw conclusions oneself, somewhat along these lines: Here is a couple who manage splendidly with rhythm, with the aid of the latest and safest methods of calculation, temperature charts, tests, etc.; they have come through unscathed; they have fulfilled their planned quota of one, two or even three children; and so they are definitely—or so it appears—on the side of the angels.

On the other side, however, we have a very mixed crowd. To start with, of course, there are those who, fearing the sacrifice involved, never wanted children and have therefore deliberately used their bodies merely for mutual pleasure, with the aid, of course, of the most effective methods of birth control. Then there are those who wanted three children, but who use artificial contraceptives—whether a diaphragm or the Rock pill—just to be on the safe side, though without intending simply to indulge in sexual pleasure. Again, there are those who want many children, as many as they reasonably can, who deliberately base their relations on real generosity and mutual reverence, and yet who in moments of "weakness" and "in extreme necessity" "do the same"—that is, prevent conception in a specific case. Should these really be regarded as belonging to the black sheep? The casuist will, of course, reply: "objectively" for certain, though perhaps not subjectively. By contrast, their smooth-sailing and unerring neigh-

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bors, relying on Ogino-Knaus, appear not only objectively but also subjectively to be in the right fold.

From all this, liberal theologians and consistent conciliators draw this inference: fundamentally, as regards the objective, we do not really differ so much from the followers of Margaret Sanger. Why should there not be some cooperation between us, since our differences turn *only* on the means to the end? Until recently, the casuists regarded this "only" as a profound chasm forever separating us Catholics from the planned parenthood societies. Now the progressives, unconsciously the spiritual heirs of the archconservative casuists, look upon it as no more than a small ditch, easy to cross if one goes about it the right way. If the casuists, with their attention focused principally on the biological correctness of marital relations, really touched the crux of the matter, then the modern architects of peace are not altogether wrong with their "only." If the end is the same, or not really so important after all, then why all this fuss about the "means to the end"?

Our purpose here is to show that infinitely more is involved than merely delimiting more or less appropriate means: more, too, than defining objectives. What is involved is the vocation of conjugal love, the basic and decisive concept of the dignity of man as a responsive and responsible being. It is helpful, in this connection, to consider more closely the significance of the notion of responsible parenthood, as opposed to that of planned parenthood or birth control.

MAN, as God's image, exists and expresses his inmost being by word and by love. But the word is not his own, and he cannot rightly decide what love is. He was created in the Word of God. He was created through Him who receives Himself from the Father as the Father's Word, and thankfully, as the Word of mutual love, gives Himself in return. Because man was created by the Word of God, and in his creation oriented toward the Word of God made man (cf. Col. 1: 13-23), he finds himself only *by listening and responding,* by listening to Him who in all things bestows on him His love, and who makes him capable of an answer adequate to the Word of His love. By his very nature, which he receives from God, man is a hearer of the Word of God, as it is echoed by creation.

God gave man a brother, a sister, a neighbor, not only that man might rediscover his own being in the other, but still more that through the exchange of word and of love with his neighbor, the Word and the love of the unseeen God might draw closer to him (cf. 1 John 4: 20). Created in the image of God, man recognizes the woman formed from his rib, from his inmost essence, as his reflection. "Here, at last, is bone that comes from mine, flesh that comes from mine; it shall be called Woman, this thing that was taken out of Man" (Gen. 2: 23). In the beginning, as they issued from the hand of God, the two had nothing to hide from one another. They opened themselves to each other as the image of God for one another. If the Bible uses the term "knowing the other" for conjugal union even after the Fall, it is clear that this union is more than a mere means to an end. It is a word, an expression of love, but only fully so if it is in accord with God's will, a "yes" to His beneficent love.

For many the word "responsibility" has worn threadbare. Superficially, it often means no more than that one has to undertake a task and figure out the consequences. It can be simply the expression of the awareness with which one approaches matters. But in the light of faith and Christian teaching about life, it means more. The word "responsibility" rightfully belongs to the believer.

In consequence of many cultural and sociological developments, conjugal union is generally regarded today primarily as the expression of love, and the engendering of new life has become a matter which people approach with increasingly reflective awareness.

In former times, as a result of environmental circumstances—the threat of unpopulated territory, the family as the unit of production and of security against old age, etc.—as a result, further, of the high rate of child mortality, of ignorance of biology, of the impossibility of establishing accurate medical diagnosis, and, not least, of a more spontaneous approach to the life processes, man tended to seek the greatest fruitfulness in marriage and to take the children as they came.

To begin with, the earlier and the present approaches are morally and religiously ambivalent, that is, potentially capable of attaining to good or descending to evil. The great temptation of former eras was to welcome large families for the economic and social advantages they procured. Obviously the devout could not ignore the fact that a large number of children benefited a family in this world too; nevertheless, they regarded such fruitfulness and the proper rearing of the children primarily in the light of those children's eternal welfare. Today, baldly utilitarian considerations lead to precisely the contrary position, namely, fear of having children. But faith is offered the opportunity of really proving itself. Actually only a man of faith can serve life joyously, and assume responsibility for his action.

If it is realized that the Christian religion signifies life, then obviously its permanently valid principles must be rethought and recast in the light of the new approach, using its language and respecting its mood. Only thus can moral teaching move modern man to listen and to respond; only thus can it contribute to the discernment of spirits. Not everything in history is to be regarded as an advance. But the advance to keener awareness lies in the plan of Divine Providence and calls for a more radical decision. If formerly the engendering of children was merely an economic neces-

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sity, today it should be the expression of responsibility, of wisdom and of prudence. This requires greater virtue. New opportunities for good can also be the occasion for a greater fall.

Awakened consciousness is not yet wisdom. That is apparent from the vocabulary of the European and American protagonists of "birth control." Their attitude is marked by a high degree of awareness and sophistication in regard to the great life processes of generation and conjugal union. Man occupies the center of the stage, independently and arbitrarily controlling, calculating, planning. The technocrat does not speak of "ministering to new life;" he prefers the word "reproduction," though without always realizing that this language is borrowed from the old liberal economists and from Karl Marx, who included the reproduction of work forces among the factors of economic production in the treatise on "the iron law of wages." The term "planned parenthood" is very apt. The family is planned even before the couple are married: "two children, and that will do." Plans are made, too, on the national and international levels, plans prescribing specific maximum birth quotas for every nation and every family. The prime consideration in such planning is the standard of living of a particular social stratum, of a country, etc.

All this reveals the keen awareness of the technocrat, of the autocratic demiurge who desires to fashion the world according to his own purposes. He sees no problem in the total sundering of the two elements of reproduction and love in conjugal union; for just as the engendering of new life under the formality of reproduction is unconsciously regarded as serving or disserving economic ends, so too the expression of love is regarded primarily as a matter of "success" in the sexual sphere, ensuring what is considered to be a certain necessary degree of affection or pleasure. This is evidenced by the manner in which the "means to the end" are selected, promoted and justified. Just as the filter cigarette is advertised as providing enjoyment without regret, so the various mechanical and chemical contraceptives are offered primarily as affording success, safety and undisturbed pleasure.

It is useful, in this connection, to look into the "vocabulary of inhumanity" which exists in every language, just as in Germany, after the collapse of Hitler's "thousand-year" Reich, it was necesary to determine how far the language had been tainted by this distorted mentality. The Christian must be constantly on his guard lest he unwittingly adopt the vocabulary of the materialist.

THE CHRISTIAN has no reason to regard the awakened consciousness about the engendering of new life as an undesirable development. What he has to do is to give that consciousness its proper content. The Church's teaching authority and theology have clearly voiced their approval of the development, but in the sense of religious responsibility. Pope John XXIII, for instance, in *Mater et Magistra,* said that young people should be brought to "a profound sense of responsibility in all life's deeds, including those connected with setting up a family and the conception and education of children."

A phenomenology of what "responsible parenthood" can and should mean for the believer must strongly emphasize the following: husband and wife should try to solve the basic problems in this area by means of loving *discussion.* Such discussion must go to the roots of the question, both spouses having surrendered themselves to God in an attitude of attentiveness and response. Responsible parenthood, therefore, is an expression of *faith;* the spouses must listen, must wait upon the Lord, in order to understand the fulness of His loving intentions in regard to their vocation as spouses and parents. They must see everything connected with their vocation in the light of faith, "talk it over" with God. And everything in their lives must become an expression of Christian *hope* and confidence in God. This means that they must in the first place surrender themselves personally to God.

The engendering of new life, no less than the education of children, must take its form and center in Divine *love* (*agape, caritas*), which illuminates and raises human love in its totality. Christlike love looks first at the love received from God, in order to respond with like love and in the strength of the same love. So that the most beautiful adage of responsible parenthood is: "The Lord's mercies have never failed me; what return shall I make to Him?" (Ps. 115). Responsible parenthood is the expression of that prudence which in its turn is the fruit of wisdom. That is why it can correctly measure the loftiest significance and the gladsome obligation imposed by God's gifts. When a couple face the question whether they may or should desire a new addition to their family, Christian prudence permits them to see all the factors in the proper light and proportion, starting with health, daily bread, housing, right up to the question of education. Since prudence is a daughter of wisdom, a form of love, the crucial question is: Is the concrete desire for another child here and now a true expression of love of God, of love of spouse, of love of the children already born, of love of the being whose existence is really at issue?

Prudence does not ask, once and for all: How many children do we want to have? It is permanently oriented towards the *kairos* (in Scriptural language, the right moment, as prepared by God; the present task). Responsible parenthood is an expression of *fortitude,* "that love which for God's sake bears all things easily," as St. Augustine says in his comments on the cardinal virtues. It sees clearly the necessary sacrifices involved, but in the right light and in the strength required for the courageous imitation of Christ. Prudence and for-

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titude go hand in hand with justice, "the love which serves God alone and therefore orders rightly everything else entrusted to men." But it is the cardinal virtue of *temperance* which presides over the realization of responsible parenthood. Temperance is "the love which keeps itself intact for God."

Nor should humility be forgotten where the "discernment of the essentially Christian" is concerned. Humility is that fundamental attitude which does not allow a man to forget that he is but a wayfarer, and that relying fully on God's help and mercy, he must constantly attempt a better realization, a better plan, a brighter and more convincing testimony. The virtue of humility guards against false self-assurance and self-satisfaction; it keeps man constantly in readiness to wait upon the will of God in the present moment; it guards him against the arbitrary planning which figures everything out once and for all, an attitude so typical of persons wholly oriented to this world. The responsible man is a man who prays and struggles, precisely in regard to the important question which we are discussing.

This short analysis has made it plain that responsible parenthood and birth control in the characteristic sense of planned parenthood are two wholly distinct worlds. Nevertheless we must not forget that in actuality things are often very involved. Only with the second coming of the Lord will virtues and vices be completely separated in the field of this world. People often use the expression "responsible parenthood" without thinking of or concerning themselves with Him to whom they owe response and responsibility. A Catholic dignitary may refer to "birth control," and yet make it clear through the context that he is really speaking of a heroic, but also prudent, readiness to have children. Hitler rejected birth control, but all he cared about was the "reproduction" of eitizens, workers and soldiers. Nevertheless some of his followers were not wholly devoid of a feeling for sound family life.

Justice and the ecumenical approach prompt us, today more than ever, to recognize that many Protestants and Jews, whose views on certain contraceptive methods differ from ours, would never approve of arbitrary planning or of the undisciplined exploitation of the spouse. Their position is perhaps closer, on the whole, to the essence of a religiously motivated responsible parenthood than is the scrupulous calculation and adherence to rhythm of those who actually feel that their reasons for not wanting to have any more children are not altogether valid.

The whole of Christian life is governed by the law of gradual refinement and conversion, the law of growth in struggle and purification. The decisive factor for the moral judgment is the direction in which the compass needle is pointing.

Just as the first conjugal "knowing" is only the beginning of an ever deepening dialogue of love between the spouses, so their attention to God's will and their readiness and capacity to make of everything a response of faith, of hope and of love must gradually attain new dimensions. Any rigid calculating and planning for the entire future must be recognized as the arch-enemy of progressive maturity.

THE CONCEPT of responsible parenthood is not exhausted in the single, general question: How many children can we assume responsibility for? The prudential judgment of people with radiant faith and joyous optimism must necessarily differ from that of persons with a de-Christianized, materialistic background who have only just made their way to faith. True Christian prudence is involved in the specific question whether now, in given circumstances and as long as these circumstances obtain, any addition to the family should be sought. The judgment rendered will always reflect the existing stage of growth and maturity.

The concrete, actual stage of faith, of recognition of moral values and of moral freedom, belongs to the gifts through which God makes His practical will known. A couple may have felt themselves heroic some years before, when they wanted a fourth child. A few years later, after they have prepared their two eldest children for their First Communion and introduced them ever more deeply into the wonderful world of faith, they find it quite natural to say a thankful "yes," in joyous faith, to the advent of a sixth child.

The same applies to marital chastity. Its imperatives grow with marital love. The capacity for chastity—in the sense of capacity for virtue, but also in the sense of recognition of what is good and perfect—is not the effect of external compulsion but of the inner worth of the person concerned. It is not only unpromising, but actually dangerous, to try to impose positively heroic demands in regard to marital chastity without taking full account of the whole religious and moral situation of the spouses. Moral growth is something organic. Training in chastity is jeopardizing just as surely by emphasis on that virtue to the neglect of the other virtues, as by the kind of casuistry which speaks only of its minimum demands.

Christian conjugal morality is ordained to the highest purposes, but it is also an expression of Divine patience. In the same discourse in which Jesus defines the lofty aim of the whole life of His disciples—"This is my commandment, that you should love one another, as I have loved you" (John, 15: 12)—we find this other phrase: "I have still much to say to you, but it is beyond your reach as yet" (John 16: 12).

The widespread opposition in most countries to the official teaching of the Church on conjugal morality may be laid at the door chiefly of moralists and pastors who simply ignored the law of growth and instead,

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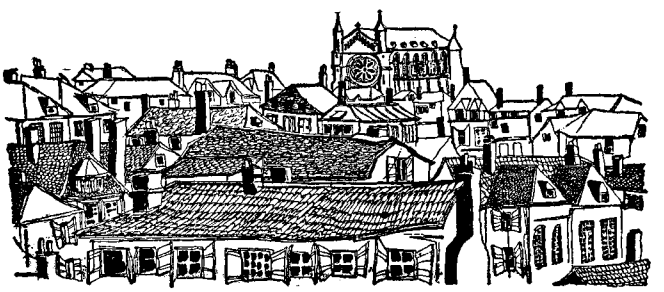
like the hotelkeeper Procrustes in the Greek myth, fitted life either to the featherbed or to the rack of their statistical, externally motivated requirements. In one case they would stretch a man's limbs; in another, they would cut short a man's head and feet. Those richly endowed by God they would emasculate with their morality of minimum requirements; those who came from afar they would overwhelm at the very doorstep with demands which become obvious only to the truly acclimatized. A purely statistical morality, which purports to determine what is objectively right and wrong only in the light of external, impersonal, mechanically recurrent factors, is always both lax and rigorous at the same time. It is lax towards those who have received five talents and harsh with those poorest ones who should be helped to discover their single talent.

Of course there are natural law requirements which are basically valid, simply by reason of the vocation of man as such; but the law of growth too must be taken into account. And because man, wounded by original sin, his spiritual heritage often impaired, is bowed down under the weight of an unfavorable environment, it is often necessary to take account of incapacity of knowing and willing in regard to what is in itself a requirement of a healthy nature.

St. Alphonsus Liguori's teaching concerning what is often invincible ignorance despite an upright conscience, even regarding the requirements of natural moral law, always displeased the rigorists. Yet it is in no way dangerous if the moral life is envisaged as dynamic, subject to the law of growth. What is necessary at any given moment is to take the next step; what is important is that that step should be taken honestly as a step to something better. Basically it is all a matter of direction, in accordance with Cardinal Newman's famous phrase: "I have always believed that obedience to conscience, even to a conscience in error, is the best road to light."

To take the law of growth into account is to safeguard mankind from the thoroughly dangerous loss of a shining example on the part of those who are preferred by nature and by grace and who should be a light and support to the weaker.

OUR EXPERIENCE of Vatican II gives us a better understanding of what Cardinal Newman wrote about the development of dogma in the Church. It, too, is subject to the law of growth, which does not mean that there is always a steady upward progression. In the field of morals, moreover, many problems are posed altogether differently with the passage of time. Sometimes a long struggle is needed to work out all the necessary distinctions in sufficient clarity.



This was the case, for instance, with regard to the Church's prohibition of interest on loans. Its premises were permanent principles of social justice and love, and an economic structure which was taken for granted and assumed to be more or less permanent. Shortly before the definitive emergence of a new economic era, the fifteenth general council at Vienne (1311-1312) threatened theologians who might dare to justify loans against interest with chains and imprisonment. At the end of a long process of development, we have Pius XI's encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, which, in the modern economic structure, unequivocally conceded to capital the right to a reasonable rate of interest. The Church did not arrive at this conclusion overnight. Nor was it proclaimed without concurrent emphasis on the equally high degree of social responsibility expected of the Christian.

Something similar has happened in the case of conjugal morality. It has developed in various respects, both as a result of clearer distinctions and of a more convincing motivation and overall perspective. It would be mistaken to expect the Church some day to revoke the teaching of *Casti Connubii* and to teach precisely the contrary. But neither are the requirements of sound theology and pastoral care satisfied by a one-sided adherence to the formulations of that great document of the Church's teaching authority. Here, too, in accordance with the universal recommendation of Pope John at the opening of Vatican II, the substance of the ancient doctrine must be distinguished from the way in which it is presented. The encyclical, published nearly thirty-five years ago, at the time constituted a milestone on the road to a more positive spirituality of marriage; but the formulations concerning abuses in marriage were framed with a backward glance at an era which had not yet come to a close, not in anticipation of what was to become an increasingly general attitude and social structure.

This should not be construed as a criticism of a teaching document, but rather as a justification against those who interpret it mechanically and want to apply it mechanically, thus bringing it into disrepute. Today, in consequence not only of more exact exegetical studies but also of a radically changed atmosphere, married couples who for a certain time are obliged to prevent a new conception and who, in good consicence or not, fail to find the right means, will not automatically be put on a level with Onan (Gen. 38), who wantonly cheated his wife and kin by sinning unconditionally against the engendering of new life. But it is even more

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of an anachronism to argue against large families in countries like the United States, Canada or Germany, with their abundance of foodstuffs, whereas in certain parts of the world, such as India for instance, the food question can be taken very seriously into consideration.

While certain individual moral questions can rightly be left open for discussion among doctors, psychologists and theologians, those Christians who know what they mean by responsible parenthood will certainly not subscribe to any defacing of conjugal love by the deliberate perversion of conjugal union. *Any arbitrary violation* of the personal realization of conjugal love or of the natural functions must be rejected as a matter of principle. But any moral judgment concerning a mode of conduct must necesarily have regard to the general orientation of people's lives. A retrogressive step in an area which has long been recognized as a contradiction of genuinely responsible love constitutes a much greater evil than the perhaps outwardly greater imperfection of others who, despite all weakness, still strive unswervingly towards the full light of a purified love.

Translated by MARY ILFORD

The New Context

Population and Parenthood

THOMAS K. BURCH

NOT SINCE the days of Malthus has the "population question" commanded so much interest, discussion, and, more recently, feverish activity. In the 1930's, to be sure, many were concerned over the possible, or as it then seemed, imminent population decline in the industrial nations of the West. But this concern was limited in many ways. It focussed on the trends in one part of the world, was overshadowed by more pressing problems such as the Depression and the prospects of war, and never led to direct government action here in the United States.

By contrast, today almost everyone seems worried about the "population problem," which is taken to afflict in one way or another not just a few nations but the whole world. At the same time it is coming to be given the highest of priorities, being ranked in importance with the problem of all-out nuclear war. Finally, population has become the object of direct action by governments, by numerous private organizations, and in some instances by the Church. Discussion is being translated into action.

The likelihood of large-scale action in this field makes it more than ever urgent that one have a good understanding of just what the "population problem" is and some rational assessment of the efficacy of proffered solutions. Much of the discussion to date (and not solely by presumably uninformed people) has lacked both these qualities, pushed along by the emotional force of such highly suggestive phrases as "standing room only," "migration to Mars," or "population explosion." It would, of course, be vain to attempt a definitive statement of the problem or a final judgment on possible solutions. But some rather obvious clarifications are very much in order.

First of all, it must be said that there is no such thing as *the* population problem, and therefore, the question "What is the solution to the population problem?" comes very close to being meaningless. There are countless ways in which population trends can affect the life of the race, the nation, the family or the individual. And, depending on one's values, any or all of these trends can be judged problematical. In the United States, for example, the business community commonly welcomes the idea of rapid growth and sees the proliferation of suburbs and shopping centers as a sign of good times ahead. Others see in the same developments a major threat to the preservation and enhancement of beauty, particularly natural beauty. Similarly, the prospect of an increased numerical superiority of the peoples of Asia when all is said and done must be a source of some pride and satisfaction to them. Those who identify the future of civilization or even of the Church with the continued hegemony of the European cultural area, by contrast, may consider it an ominous prospect indeed. The racist no doubt is beside himself with fear and resentment. In short, the ethical values one brings to demographic facts have much to do with the problems one finds in them.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC facts, moreover, differ considerably from one time and place to another. Immediately after the war Japan had a moderately high birth rate and annual rate of increase. Today the birth rate is lower than in the United States, and attention is beginning to

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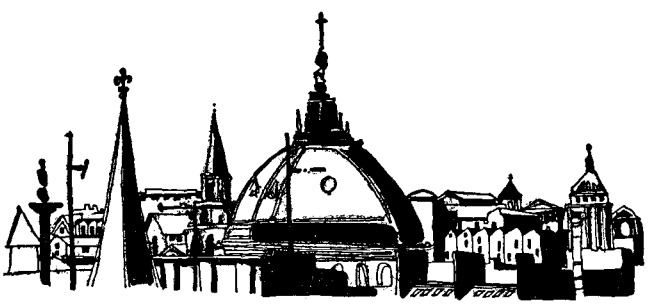
shift from problems of rapid growth and crowding to problems of peculiarities in age structure resulting from sharp declines in birth rates. Some European countries still worry about long-standing slow growth and the resulting high proportion of older people in the population.

Even in the underdeveloped nations, where rapid growth is singled out for concern, rates of increase differ greatly. In India, the favorite example of population problems, the annual rate of growth is a little over two percent, although this figure may well increase in the near future. In Iraq, Venezuela and Costa Rica, the reported figure is better than twice as high, around four percent. In some of the developing nations, the growth rate is still well under that of the United States. Differences every bit as large exist among these nations in regard to numbers, average density, problems of uneven distribution, and prospects of international or internal migration. In short, demographically speaking, even the underdeveloped nations are not of a piece. Meaningful definitions of problems and suggestions for their solutions must be tailor-made, even if the cost seems high in terms of intellectual effort.

If the concrete situations manifest variety which must be respected in action programs, however, one can still speak of an underlying demographic trend which is problematical in a very fundamental human sense. This is the achievement of what can be called (at the risk of being outdated at some later time) minimum mortality. By this is meant the level of death rates associated with an expectation of life at birth of seventy or more years. Such levels have been achieved in many of the advanced, industrial nations of the West, and are being approached by nations in other areas of the world, some of them still underdeveloped socially and economically.

The meaning of an expectation of life of seventy years can be best understood in the following concrete terms. When mortality is that low, approximately 98 out of 100 infants survive to their first birthday; better than 90 out of 100 on the average will live to their forty-fifth birthday. In general, only a small minority of human beings born fail to live to late adulthood.

The most striking thing about these demographic facts is that they represent a radically changed context of human life, a radical departure from the experience of the race through most of its history. So far as we know, until the modern era the prevailing death rates the world over were such that one quarter of all babies died before their first birthday, and only about one-third of all human beings reached the age of 45. Even in India and other underdeveloped nations today, the expectation of life is 45 years or under, so that roughly one-half of the population dies before age 45, one-fifth in the first year of life. The modern postponement of death and the related lower frequency of death (under minimum mortality levels the relative numbers of deaths annually may be as much as one-fifth as great) are surely facts of profound human significance.



SOME OF their implications are quite concrete. Married couples living under conditions of minimum mortality can expect to avoid widowhood until relatively late in life. Similarly, they can expect virtually all of their babies to live to adulthood. If they have ten babies, they can expect to rear ten children. They also are more likely to know and perhaps have some responsibilities for their grandchildren. Years ago, three births could easily have meant an only child; today, three births means a family of three children. In short, the whole process of family formation and dissolution has been substantially altered.

Similarly dramatic changes occur in the growth process of national populations when mortality reaches low levels. Annual rates of increase of four percent become quite feasible. If fertility were to be high, say eight children per married couple, the rate could reach five percent with the population tending to double about every fifteen years or so. The potential for growth brought about by modern declines in mortality has been nicely illustrated by a French demographer who calculated that if death rates in France had declined as they actually did since the 18th century without a concomitant decline in birth rates from the 18th century level, the population of France today would be roughly ten times as large as it is—or over 400 million.

In pondering all of the implications of extremely low mortality, its far-reaching effects on human life, one is led to the conclusion that as mortality declines proceed apace man finds increasing reason to regulate fertility and population growth even where he faces no stark problems of finding space or food. In other terms, all of the exigencies of human life, not just those relating to mere subsistence, seem to render maximum childbearing inappropriate when death rates are minimum.

This point often is obscured by current focus on the poor, at home or abroad, in discussion and proposals relating to birth control. Any man and any nation, whether rich or poor, that experiences modern death rates, must face the profoundly changed significance of human reproduction.

In the West, the adjustment has taken place. In the United States, for instance, virtually all fertile married couples limit their births, and have an average number

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far below what is biologically possible. In Europe, birth rates and annual population growth are even lower, partly because of birth limitation within marriage, partly because of later age at marriage than that in the United States.

From the Christian point of view, however, the routinization of fertility and population control in the advanced nations is a problem in itself, since both in its motivation and execution it often lacks a Christian foundation. The still frequent charge that modern couples are selfish, sensuous, un-heroic, materialistic because of their general desire for smaller numbers of births, incidentally, seldom takes into account the changed conditions in which they live and procreate.

THE REGULATION of fertility, then, is an integral part of modern life, irrespective of levels of living. When the element of poverty—economic, social, emotional, educational—is added, the problem takes on added urgency. It is then a question of couples or nations who can help themselves only to a limited extent. This explains and partially justifies recent tendencies to equate the problem of poverty with the problem of birth control. Poverty does not of itself create the need for birth control, nor does the absence of birth control as such create poverty. But unregulated fertility and population growth take on added seriousness in a context of poverty.

The United States, for instance, with its bountiful resources and sparsely settled hinterlands, could probably sustain higher rates of growth for the indefinite future without any serious deterioration in current high levels of living. This is not to say there might not be inconveniences and strains, but by and large moderate affluence would be possible for a long time. India, on the other hand, with its dense settlement and notoriously low levels of living, almost certainly could not cope with a substantial increase over current growth rates. In fact, even current rates probably are a handicap.

So with the family. The well-to-do couple in the U.S. often can manage a very large family with little strain, thanks to a large house, domestic help and other family services. The slum family of ten children is hard-pressed to maintain itself as a family. On a different plane, emotional wealth may be just as relevant. The emotionally balanced and generally resourceful couple can manage a family that would keep others in a constant state of strain and turmoil from which all, including the children, might suffer.

In any case, there is without question a general human need to regulate fertility and to control population growth below the biological maximum. Catholics, therefore, must harmonize this need with the teachings of the Faith. And recent developments within the Catholic community indicate that such a confrontation is finally taking place.

Yet every advance carries with it the seeds of future downfall. In this case, there are signs that both among Catholics and non-Catholics the common sense recognition of the need for fertility regulation and population control stands in danger of degenerating into an irrational, quasi-religious faith in birth control as a panacea of human ills. The testimonials to this faith take many forms, some blatant, some rather subtle.

An example of the more blatant is found in a recent Washington *Post* news story. Reporting on the speech of the president of the American Humanist Association, the story opened: "A need for world-wide birth control to control population explosion *and thus end* hunger and poverty . . . was stressed yesterday" (emphasis added). Birth control—an end of poverty and hunger—the connection is emotionally appealing, but about as unrealistic as one can imagine. Similar statements are not uncommon these days, some of them flatly promising an end to human misery if only birth control is pushed to the limit; some, a bit more subtle, suggesting that of all the things one can do to alleviate poverty and associated evils, the all-out promotion of birth control is without any rival in either importance or temporal priority.

Technological believers focus their attention on the "breakthrough" in fertility control. "If only we had a cheap, simple, effective and aesthetically pleasing form of birth control. . . . " If so, then what? The suggestion is that somehow our worries would be over. In fact, the gigantic task of promoting orderly worldwide social and economic development to raise standards of living to decent levels would still be very much with us. The ultimate contraceptive is still only a contraceptive.

Those interested in the Church's role in these matters often pin their hopes on a "magisterial break-through" —"If only the Church would accept 'the pill.' . . . " Prescinding completely from the theological question involved, one can suggest that it would make far less difference than many imagine.

This is not to say, lest there be any misunderstanding, that regulation of fertility and of population growth is not a necessary part of any effective attack on poverty and other forms of human misery. It is not to say that technological developments in fertility control are of little importance. It is not to say that a wider range of licit forms of control is not an attractive prospect from the practical point of view. It is to say, however, that one of the most serious delusions abroad today is that birth control provides an easy way out of our difficulties. There has been among some Catholics a certain quietistic notion of Divine Providence in its relation to family size and population growth, a notion symbolized by a shrug of the shoulder and a casual "God will provide." Today increasing numbers seem afflicted with a secular version of this attitude. Their motto might be "The pill will provide."

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An irrational faith in the salvific effects of birth control, of course, is essentially escapism. It is a common variety in current population-poverty discussions. But some other varieties are still very much with us. A surprising number still argue in terms of people and food. Food production is increasing faster than population growth, they say (which is not universally true today), and therefore there is no problem at present. Ultimately the world can provide food for 50 billion and more and therefore there is no problem for the foreseeable future. This continued tendency to define problems of human welfare in narrow gastronomical terms can only result from a desire to explain these problems away.

Then there are the prophets, who seriously ask us to alter radically our present ways because of what may transpire in the year 2050. But this too, a long-faced concern for the long-range future, is often a way of escape from present difficulties. One could multiply examples of such irrational running away. But the specific form it takes in a given instance is not the important thing. What matters is that there is so much of it.

As the population debate of the sixties continues, it becomes increasingly easy to understand how rare and how valuable a thing is intellectual courage—the willingness to see a problem in all its immensity and complexity, to admit that easy solutions are not at hand, and to refuse at the same time to run away, in whatever direction. May we all be braver.

Interview with Father E. Schillebeeckx

Procreation and Human Dignity

THE FOLLOWING IS a translation of a small part of an interview with Father E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., (adviser to the Dutch Bishops in Rome and the author of *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God)* by Father P. Wesseling, C.Ss.R. and Carol Enkelaar. The interview was about the second session of the Council and covered a wide range of topics, of which only one is treated in the following translation.

The conversation was registered on tape, transcribed and slightly edited, after which it was submitted to Father Schillebeeckx, who made some corrections and approved it. It took place in Rome, on December 2, 1963, and it was published in the weekly *De Linie*, formerly sponsored by the Flemish Jesuits in Brussels, on December 20, 1963.

Where the Flemish original was difficult to translate faithfully into English, a note had been added by the translator.

Q. There is a rather strong controversy going on between Prof. Duynstee and many others, e.g. Dr. Trimbos, concerning "the pill." Prof. Duynstee always appeals to the natural law. But quite a number of people have the impression that his appeal to the natural law is slightly old-fashioned. Can one really affirm that anti-conceptional preventive means are against the natural law? What do you think of it?

A. The whole question is: What *is* natural law? That concept is very much discussed. In *"het Werkgenootschap"* I have put down a few ideas about the natural law. This has been translated into English; and I hear now that some Englishmen are saying here that I no longer admit the natural law . . . Many abstract thinkers see the natural law too much as a biological law: that is the way the human body is made. According to them we might deduce from the make-up of the human body itself how we ought to use it morally. Hence every human intervention which would produce a temporary break between sexual experience and the possibility of procreation, of reproduction, is said to be against the natural law. If, on the other hand, we consider the natural law as an ideal [tr.—"reality-exigency"] and if we consider what man is anthropologically and what is the real meaning of this action, then the natural law gets a more supple meaning.

It is evident that one cannot do with man whatever one wishes. Somewhere there is a norm, namely the norm of human dignity [tr.—"that which is worthy of human beings"]. But what is human dignity? This is a norm which man discovers in the course of time only in an evolutive manner. Only gradually man begins to see what precisely constitutes human dignity in these given circumstances. An ideal image develops, which is unassailable, whose meaning is not imposed by man, does not depend on his whim, and which, as such, must serve as a norm for human action. But in this development earlier affirmations may pick up such nuances, that we come to stand before relatively new affirmations. The Council cannot act as if all over the world there were no problem of "the pill." This will receive much attention.

Q. What is your own opinion right now?

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A. Should this Council say nothing about the whole population explosion and likewise nothing about this concrete marriage distress, it would create the impression that it stands outside of the world. But I do not want to anticipate the preparatory discussions which are already taking place on this matter. The only thing which can be said now is that many theologians have serious doubts about this question.

Q. Does that which is true for "the pill" eventually apply also to all other preventive means?

A. In determined circumstances the married couple in their marriage-project want the child in a manner which is worthy of a human being. Those who use periodic continence also exclude the child in this particular act. Certainly, they do nothing for it, yet they positively exclude it. Nevertheless they want the child, in a human way, with sufficient intervals. When they use a technical means, they also exclude the child. In that case too they want the child at sufficient intervals, hence in a human, responsible way. The question is: Does the means which is used violate one's own human dignity and that of the life partner? Does it or does it not injure intersubjectivity?

Q. May we try to reverse this? You say: they want the child, but they wish to be able to give it a "human" existence. Might we not say: if you do not do this, if you do not care about this "human" existence of the child, if you live haphazardly, as happens very often, why has the Church never protested against this? Is that not much worse?

A. Of course, that too is not worthy of human beings. The Council will also emphasize that the child must be wanted *in a "human" and Christian way*. The Church can give no directives about whether there should be many or few children. This is a personal decision of the conscience of the parents. I do not want to point out a direction here, but I only plead that the Council will have to give these questions much thought. The question is not as clear as is sometimes asserted. He who disapproves of anti-conceptional means for all cases must present arguments which are really apodictic. We shall also have to reflect on the incidental utterances of Pius XII. Of course, his statement can still receive further nuances.

Thus we might say that the sexual experience and the possibility of procreation may not be separated in the marriage-*project*. Marriage is not a general interpersonal relationship, but one of a very specific kind. But this can say nothing yet about the individual marriage-*act*. The distinction between the fundamental life-attitude and the individual act is not without importance. *All* meanings, *all* human significances of the marriage must not be realized in every separate act. That is impossible. But the total marriage-project may exclude no single essential meaning. A separate act may do this. This is evident, for instance, in periodic continence, which has the approval of the Church herself. Therefore the Council will have to reflect on the problem here presented: whether, in cases of need, one of the meanings of the marriage may also be excluded by technical means. . . . Hence we have here several elements which make a new reflection on this position necessary, especially since, according to some biologists, this is not even a question of *anti*-conception, but of *a*-conception. It is quite possible that the Council may not even reach a final decision in this matter.

Canon Janssens' Argument

Morality of the Pill

ONE OF the most controversial theological articles which has appeared in many years was "*Morale Conjugale et Progestogènes*," written by Canon L. Janssens of the theological faculty of the University of Louvain, and published in late 1963 in *Ephemerides Theologicae Louvanienses*. An unofficial translation of a small portion of his article follows:

Birth regulation is now recognized in Catholic moral teaching. Pius XII asserted "both its legitimacy and its limits, which are really very broad." But have moralists reflected sufficiently on the implications and consequences of this approbation? Formerly, as long as it was impossible to determine what acts of coitus were likely to be procreative, physiologically possible fecundity took place spontaneously where couples had regular sexual relations. Except in the rare cases of couples who practiced prolonged continence, the physiological norm was also, in fact, the moral norm. Now that we are more familiar with the physiological processes, it is more possible to go beyond them. In other words, the physiological norm can give way to a more deeply moral norm, based on the fundamental values of marriage, namely, the exigencies of mutual love and the upbringing of children. In this respect, the objective situation, which is the source of valid indications, differs from family to family, and each couple have to ask themselves in conscience what, in their particular circum-

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stances, is the generous measure of fecundity to be achieved.

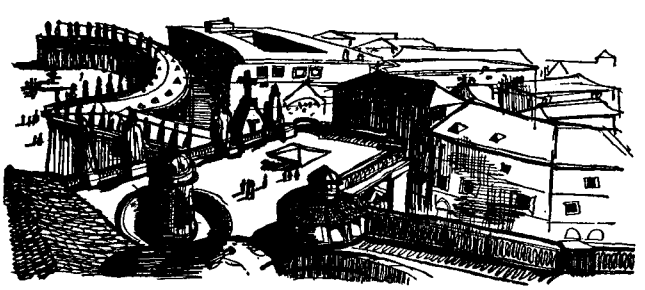
It seems to us that, in order to answer this important question, a distinction should be made between what is required in the specific circumstances of the *marriage*, or the home, and what is required in each *marital act*.

First of all, the spouses have to avoid all selfish calculations, and what they propose to make of their *marriage* must include a real purpose of generous fecundity. From the moral point of view, this fundamental disposition is decisive. Its overriding importance cannot be sufficiently stressed. For it can be absent even where the spouses respect the material structure of sexual relations. For example, if a couple, for purely selfish motives, and without any objective factors requiring it, systematically practice periodic continence in order to avoid procreation altogether, they do not vitiate the material structure of the sexual act, and yet the *marriage* as such is governed by a fundamentally bad disposition. In some manuals, this practice was barely censured at all, out of reluctance to speak of sin so long as the materiality of the sexual relations was "correct." A terrible biologism, completely closed to true morality. Fortunately Pius XII clarified the point by saying that the systematic practice of periodic continence with a view to "shirking this primary obligation (procreation) constantly and deliberately, with no serious motive, would be a sin against the very meaning of married life" (Address of Oct. 2, 1951).

The spouses cannot, of course, foresee what situations they will have to confront in the course of their conjugal life, nor determine in advance the number of children they can and should have. Consequently, if their purpose—their plan—of generous fecundity is to be real and effective, it must be the subject of a continuous dialogue during their married life, and in each new situation they must consider in conscience what God expects of their generosity.

But while the fundamental moral exigency is that generous procreation should be desired, purposed and willed, it is also required that each *marital act* should be respected in its natural structure. Sexual relations may not be deliberately vitiated. How is this moral exigency to be justified?

LET US set aside first certain arguments which are often advanced, but which do not seem to be valid.



In order to establish, on the strength of a biblical argument that the marital act must not be vitiated by contraceptive devices, moralists often cite the sin of Onan (Gen. 38: 8-10). But the exegetes tell us that the reason for the divine punishment was the violation of the levirate law described in Deuteronomy (Deut. 25: 5-10).

It is also maintained that the *copula cum retractu* and the use of contraceptive devices directly violate the moral requirement that the marital act should never *positively* exclude procreation. But this positive exclusion seems to be just as present in the practice of periodic continence. For to exclude something positively by our action means excluding it not only in intention, but also by the choice of the *means*, namely, the external act. But what happens in the practice of periodic continence? Procreation is certainly excluded from the intention. And it is also eliminated by the choice of the means. For the subject of the choice is not just any marital act, but a particular act, performed specifically and deliberately at a particular time, expressly chosen because it is known to belong to a period of sterility.

The order of the means is the sphere of concrete reality. It receives its significance from all the components of the unique situation of behavior. Now in actions which give effect to relations between living beings, the time element plays a major part; life is a history which unfolds in temporality, and the different moments of time one lives through have their own significance which profoundly affects the meaning of the actions performed at those different moments. Ask a hunter who fires at birds in flight whether the direction in which he aims his gun (spatial element) is sufficient, or whether, perhaps, the moment of firing (temporal element) is also of some importance in lending efficacy to the means employed. Ask an acrobat swinging on a high bar, who momentarily lets go his support to leap toward another acrobat some yards away, whether, in order to connect with the hands or feet of the other in mid-air, it is sufficient to calculate the distance accurately (space), or whether it is also necessary to choose the right moment (time) for the jump.

In order to understand what is positively willed or excluded in the means one chooses, it is necessary to analyze the meaning of all the elements involved in the concrete situation. Now because of the temporality of our existence, the time element plays an important part in it. It is precisely this temporal element which gives the practice of periodic continence the significance of a means which positively excludes procreation. This will be clearer when we explicitly compare the practice of periodic continence and the use of progestins.

For the moment, it is enough to note that the practice of periodic continence positively excludes procreation;

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it creates a *temporal* obstacle through the decision to confine sexual relations solely to periods of infecundity, just as mechanical contraceptive devices constitutes a *spatial* obstacle by placing a material partition between the organs of the spouses (the *copula cum retractu* also constitutes a spatial obstacle, as is shown in the moralists' definition of it: *semen virile non deponitur in* loco *debito*). When the spouses practice periodic continence, they doubtless respect the objective structure of the marital act, whereas the use of mechanical contraceptive devices or the *copula cum retractu* vitiates the act . . . This difference . . . is of capital importance. But in any case the reason for this difference cannot be that only the employment of contraceptive devices positively excludes procreation, since the practice of periodic continence also excludes it positively, both in intention and in the choice of the means. . . .

The moral problem of the use of progestins. We have considered, at some length, the moral standards governing sexual relations in marriage. This analysis has permitted us to situate the practice of periodic continence in this context, a practice which moralists regard as morally justified in certain circumstances. We would now appear to have the requisite data for tackling the moral problem of the use of progestins. For it seems to us that in order to arrive at a moral judgment concerning their use, we have to compare it with the practice of periodic continence. We shall base our comparison on the scientific findings supplied by J. Ferin and J. Rock.

1. There is a great difference between the use of mechanical contraceptive devices and the practice of periodic continence. In the latter, the natural structure of the marital act is respected, and the act thus retains its intrinsic purpose of serving the ends of conjugal love. In the former, this purpose is impaired inasmuch as the marital act is vitiated. But from the point of view of this intrinsic purpose of the marital act, the use of progestins can be assimilated to the practice of periodic continence; it permits the spouses to respect the nature and structure of the marital act and to preserve its complete purpose of serving the ends of their mutual love.

2. If periodic continence is practiced systematically for purely selfish motives, in order to avoid generous fecundity, it radically conflicts with the very essence of marriage; it is the positive cause of the sterility of the marriage. In that case, both intention and choice of means are ordered to the achievement of this sterility. Obviously progestins can be misused to the same end. But periodic continence, practiced with a view to the regulation of births, if it is determined only by objectively valid factors in no way conflicts with the exigencies of generous fecundity. Here again, the use of progestins can be assimilated to the practice of periodic continence, for it too can be governed by objective factors which determine the measure of generous procreation.

3. It will be objected that there is nevertheless a radical difference between the practice of periodic continence and the use of progestins. No moralist rejects periodic continence as a form of direct sterilization. The contrary is true of progestins, if they are not used on medical grounds.

But in the first place, direct sterilization should not be defined in such a way as to include in this culpable practice acts which in themselves are considered licit. Thus, for instance, one moralist defines direct sterilization as "any human intervention having as its principal aim (*finis operis*), sought by the will (*finis operantis*), to frustrate the procreative power, whether sterilization of the person is involved, or individual acts of sexual intercourse." If such a definition were correct, periodic continence would also be a form of direct sterilization. For by positively excluding fecundity, both by the choice of the act and by the intention, it constitutes a form of human intervention whose principal aim, sought by the will, is to frustrate the procreative power of individual acts of sexual intercourse. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that periodic continence is not an intrinsically evil practice, and that, consequently, it has a positive moral value provided that its motivation is good.

But let us give the floor to the experts, who will tell us just what takes place in the practice of periodic continence and in the use of progestins. Dr. J. Rock has compared the two methods from a physiological point of view.

LET US consider first what he says about periodic continence. In the course of each menstrual cycle, if it is not anovulatory, an ovum ripens and breaks loose, but it cannot exercise its reproductive function unless it is fertilized. If it is not fertilized, it will degenerate and disappear. Now the objective significance of what takes place in the practice of periodic continence consists precisely in deliberately suppressing this procreative power. For everything is nicely calculated to determine the fertile period and to give the ovum which has broken loose *time* to degenerate and disappear; due account is taken of the *duration* of the fertilizing power of the spermatozoa after the marital act, of the *time* of ovulation and of the *time* required for the loosened ovum to be eliminated, so as to be as sure as possible that all sexual intercourse will be sterile. All these calculations indicate very clearly that the deliberate goal is to create a *temporal* obstacle to the actuation of the reproductive function of the ovum (just as the use of mechanical devices or the *copula cum retractu* creates a spatial obstacle).

What occurs when progestins are used? Dr. J. Rock stresses two points in particular. 1. The use of progestins

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arrests the function of the ovaries. There is therefore neither ovulation nor loss of ova. This arrestment means that the ova, instead of arriving at maturity and having to degenerate if they are not fertilized—which is precisely what happens in the case of periodic continence—are preserved in the ovary, where they remain available and capable of development as soon as the use of progestins is stopped. Whereas the practice of periodic continence speculates, in the course of each cycle, on the degeneration of the ovum to prevent its using its procreative power, the use of progestins preserves the ova and their reproductive function for the time when the spouses judge that their obligation of generous fecundity requires procreative acts of them.

2. Moreover, whereas the practice of periodic continence has no influence on any future possibility of procreation, the use of progestins, by contrast, can increase the woman's fertility; this is so because, when she stops using progestins, she is more liable to conceive (the enhancement of ovarian activity following the phase of arrestment can be turned to account in the treatment of certain cases of sterility).

IT WILL be objected that if a woman begins to use progestins at a time when the ovarian function is in full swing, the development of a follicle is arrested, and it is thus condemned to degenerate (some moralists have even spoken in this connection of mutilation). But the loss of follicles, liable to occur once at the beginning of the arrestment of the ovaries, is repeated at each menstrual cycle where periodic continence is practiced. And if the objective is that no follicles at all should be lost, then periodic continence is not indicated, but rather the use of progestins from the time of ovarian arrestment following childbirth.

In this connection, J. Ferin provides some extremely interesting data. He says that a phase of ovarian arrestment normally follows delivery—a sterile period of very variable duration. This variability is due to the interaction of two series of factors. Some of these factors tend to hasten the resumption of ovarian activity. Others, by contrast, tend to prolong the phase of arrestment, or the sterile period; among these factors are age, multiparity, a rapid succession of pregnancies, exhausting physical work, nutritional deficiencies, some eating habits, some chronic diseases, climate, and particularly lactation. The use of progestins encourages and supports the action of the factors which delay the resumption of the ovarian function. "This intervention does not destroy anything. The point is not to arrest the ovarian function when it is in full swing, but to strengthen a physiological mechanism which delays the resumption of the ovarian function. The human intervention thus takes its place among the physiological phenomena." The phase of ovarian arrestment which normally follows delivery is due "depending on the case, either to an absence of stimulation from the central controls (hypothalamo-hypophyseal), or to an absence of reactivity of the ovary," and the "inhibitive progestins act either by blocking the central controls, or by reducing ovarian activity, that is, in a manner identical to pregnancy and lactation."

In the light of these physiological observations, let us consider the most interesting and the most important problem in the regulation of births, that of the spacing of births, which is almost always justified by objective factors. To achieve this, the couple decides to practice periodic continence. They have first to be able to determine the moment of the resumption of ovulation, which is often very difficult. After such resumption, as long as they wish to put off another pregnancy, they regulate their sexual relations during each cycle in such a way as to wait for the loosened ovum to degenerate and not to be fertilized. If, however, the spouses use progestins from the time of the ovarian arrestment following delivery, they support the physiological mechanism which tends to prolong this period of repose; they prevent the degeneration of an ovum in the course of each cycle; they preserve the follicles in a state of repose and available for development as soon as the use of progestins stops; and they enhance the woman's capacity for conception for the time when they desire to have another child.

It appears from this comparison that the human intervention is deeper in the practice of periodic continence than in the use of progestins. And yet no one claims that periodic continence is a form of direct sterilization or mutilation. It is recognized, on the contrary, that, despite the misuse to which it is liable, it is not inherently evil, and that the practice is justified whenever an objectively valid factor is present. In other words, periodic continence is not justified exclusively by therapeutic reasons, but by any objectively sufficient factor. *A fortiori*, the use of progestins, which prolongs the phase of post-partum repose with a view to spacing out births, is not an inherently evil practice. It can therefore also be justified not only by therapeutic reasons but also by any serious objective reason, that is, in practice, by the various factors governing birth regulation in the interests of generous procreation. . . .

Translated by MARY ILFORD

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From Augustine to Janssens

LOUIS DUPRE

THE PROBLEM of birth control is relatively new. It is neither stated nor solved in Scripture and the early tradition of the Church. Yet, Revelation teaches us a great deal on the meaning and nature of marriage within which the present problem arises. However new the eventual solution may be, it is obvious that it must be *in line* with the authentic tradition of the Church. In trying to find guidance for his present course of action, the Catholic Christian must first of all reflect upon the tradition of the past.

Yet, it is not always an easy task to find the "traditional" answer to a new problem. Sometimes it may require some serious rethinking of what has been uncritically accepted over a number of years. To discover the authentic Christian position takes more than a mere repetition of what we have heard before—it may call for a revision of what theologians have simply taken for granted and never thought out. The *ultimate* criteria in determining this position are the Scripture and the *infallible* teaching of the Church. Elsewhere I have argued that, thus far, the Church has not backed up the commonly taught doctrine by its infallible authority (*Cross Currents,* Winter 1964). With some recent studies at hand, I would now like to examine the teaching of the Scripture and its interpretation by the early theologians, on the end and meaning of marriage. An attentive reading of the Holy Scripture seems to shed some new light on a problem which until recently was always treated in terms of a rather dubious notion of natural law. Will the new approach lead to a different solution? At present, it is impossible to answer this question. But at least one moral theologian, Professor Louis Janssens of Louvain, finds substantial support for a new position in a comparison between St. Paul, and the spurious interpretation of his doctrine by St. Augustine which was at the origin of a new and more rigid tradition in marital ethics.

However, before going into that, we must briefly discuss the one passage in the Holy Scripture which might seem to be relevant to the present discussion on contraception: the case of Onan in Genesis 38, 8-10. By the levirate law, Onan was obliged to marry his older brother's widow and provide her with offspring so that his brother's name would not die out. "But Onan, knowing that the family would not be his, wasted his semen on the ground whenever he had intercourse with his brother's widow, so as not to give his brother a family. What he did was so displeasing to the Lord that he killed him too." In an authoritative study, Father A.-M. Dubarle concludes that Onan was punished not because of his "onanism," but because of his violation of the levirate law. To accept, on the one hand, the marital union, and, on the other hand, to refuse the obligations which alone justified it, constituted a serious crime of injustice and dishonesty. Not the contraceptive act in itself, but this act in the peculiar context of the levirate law, is at stake. The Torah has explicit and minute regulations of sexual conduct, but does not mention contraception, even though Onan's practice was common knowledge. None of the Fathers before St. Augustine seems to have interpreted it as a condemnation of contraceptive practices. Nor, for that matter, does any of them clearly condemn such practices. Only with St. Augustine does the new tradition start. But to evaluate his views correctly we have to place them in the context of his position on marriage. After we determine what the Bible says about the end and practice of marriage, we can compare the two.

In Genesis we have two different versions of the origin of marriage, each emphasizing a different aspect. The first chapter of Genesis, which probably goes back to a later and more sophisticated source, simply states: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; he created both male and female. Then God blessed them, and God said to them: 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it'" (Gen. 1: 27-28). The story of Genesis 2 is more anthropomorphic and probably also older: "For man himself no helper was found who was like him. Then the Lord God had a trance fall upon the man; and when he had gone to sleep, he took one of his ribs, closing up its place with flesh. The rib which he took from the man the Lord God built up into a woman, and brought her to the man, whereupon the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for from man was she taken.'" And the sacred author adds a moral to his story for any who might entertain doubt about its meaning: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother, and clings to his wife, so that they form one flesh." (Gen. 2: 20-24).

The meaning that he wants to communicate is differ-

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ent from or, more correctly, complementary to the one of the first chapter. In Genesis 2, the woman is the companion of the man, made of his own body and destined to return to it. The marital union is described in psychological terms, whereas in the first chapter only procreation was mentioned. In the rest of the Old Testament the emphasis is primarily on the procreative aspect of marriage with the one notable exception of the Song of Songs where all the attention goes to the pleasant companionship of the two lovers.

IN THE New Testament the procreative end of marriage is always implied. Yet the advice which St. Paul gives to married Christians does not explicitly refer to it. Here is the main text: "It is a good thing for a man to have nothing to do with women; but because there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband must give the wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan" (1 Cor. 7: 1-5).

St. Paul makes it unmistakably clear, as does the entire New Testament, that ideally the state of virginity is superior to that of marriage. But for most Christians marriage is the *safer* solution. Old age only strengthened the Apostle's view on this point. While in 1 Cor. 7,8 he still recommended that young widows remain celibate, and marry only if they could not control themselves, in his later epistle to Timothy he writes: "It is my wish that young widows shall marry again, have children and preside over a home; then they will give no opponent occasion for slander. For there have in fact been widows who have taken the wrong turning and gone to the devil" (1 Tim. 5: 14-15). One almost has the impression that some bitter experiences with young widows had wisened the Apostle.

In all this, there is not much talk about love. But neither is there the fear of the flesh which becomes so predominant in later Christian theology. And Paul's prosaic advice sounds most refreshing when compared with St. Augustine's and the Scholastics' interpretation of it. Furthermore, if the quoted texts may seem to strike a negative note, in the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul attributes to marital love the highest religious meaning which any human relation can have. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for it, to consecrate it, cleansing it by water and word, so that He might present the church to Himself all glorious, with no stain or wrinkle or anything of the sort, but holy and without blemish.

"In the same way men also are bound to love their wives, as they love their own bodies. In loving his wife a man loves himself. For no one ever hated his own body: on the contrary, he provides and cares for it; and that is how Christ treats the church, because it is His body, of which we are living parts. Thus it is that (in the words of Scripture) 'a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become a single body.' It is a great truth that is hidden here. I for my part refer it to Christ and to the church, but it applies also individually: each of you must love his wife as his very self; and the woman must see to it that she pays her husband all respect." (Eph. 5: 25-33). What greater praise of love can anyone expect? And it is to be noted that Paul does not deal exclusively with spiritual love. There is an explicit reference to the body which is even confirmed by the citation of Genesis 2.

After this beautiful text on the sense of love in Christian marriage, the writings of St. Augustine on marital ethics make rather distressing reading. One can hardly escape the impression that, with him, the theology of marriage got on the wrong track and stayed there for many centuries. Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism (mostly of the Manichean type) seem to have had as much impact on this theology as the ideas of the New Testament. To be sure, dualistic and spiritual views in which only the spiritual world is good and the material world, including sex and marriage, evil, were at work long before the beginning of Christianity: the Fourth Gospel, with its emphasis on the Logos which has become flesh, was probably written to refute a particular form of Gnostic dualism. Yet, this dualism was never given official status during the first ages of Christianity, and often ended up in some dead-end street of heresy. Through St. Augustine's writings, however, part of it became accepted into respectable Christian theology. And it has been kept there until quite recently, due to the enormous prestige of the Father of Latin theology.

COMPARING the texts of the Scripture with St. Augustine's exegesis of them, one almost feels transposed into another world. The three aspects which St. Augustine sees in marriage are all in the Scripture, *proles* (offspring), *fides* (fidelity), *sacramentum* (Christian mystery—sacrament), but somehow the entire perspective has changed. They are not integrated as in Scripture. On the same plane: marriage as Christian mystery belongs entirely to a spiritual order which has nothing to do with sex. Sexual relations are permitted only in the light of the other two aspects, to provide offspring (*proles*) and to prevent adultery of one's partner (!) (*fides*). They do not contribute anything to the sacramental value of marriage. Actually, for the good of the sacramental aspect it would be much better if husband and wife could live in complete continence. This theory would go so far in the Middle Ages that a great theo-

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logian in the Augustinian tradition, Hugo of St. Victor, could claim that the marriage contract does not *per se* include the right to sexual intercourse.

In a recent article in the *Ephemerides* of the theological faculty of Louvain, Canon Louis Janssens shows how St. Augustine reinterprets St. Paul's precepts for Christian marriage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7: 1-7). Whereas for St. Paul, husband and wife have the full right over each other's bodies, St. Augustine restricts this right to the exclusive purpose of procreation. To claim one's marriage right when there is no need for procreation is a *venial sin*. This doctrine continued into medieval theology. For St. Thomas there are only two cases in which intercourse can be had without sin: in order to procreate or to *give* one's partner his due when he claims it. Not before the seventeenth century was it admitted that sexual relations in which there was neither need nor hope for procreation could be *claimed* without sin.

In fact St. Augustine's theory goes even further: all sexual pleasure and desire are intrinsically evil for him. Only the purpose of procreation and the intention of preserving one's partner's fidelity can convert this evil into a good by subjugating it to a moral end. Augustine's entire theory of original sin has been tinted by this strange, sexual pessimism. For him the essence of original sin is concupiscence, and it is transmitted to further generations through the sexual desire in the act of conception. Again, this doctrine remained prevalent in the Western Church until the eleventh century, when St. Anselm replaced it by his definition of original sin as guilty *absence* of original justice.

Professor Janssens attacks this spurious dualism between spiritual love and sexual procreation. Undoubtedly, marital love is spiritual, but it is distinguished from all other love by the sexual attraction between persons of the opposite sex. If marital love is to maintain its *specific* character, the *eros* must be included within the *agape*, the charity, between husband and wife. To express itself this love has at its disposal the total bodily surrender, symbol of the gift of one's entire person, of which St. Paul speaks. The subjective intention of love (the *finis operantis*), then, is no longer extrinsic to an act whose only objective meaning would be procreation. No, to be an expression of love belongs as much to the *intrinsic* and *objective* meaning of the marital act (and not merely to the subjective intention of the agent), as to be creative of new life.

Once this is admitted, the possibility of a conflict between love and procreation cannot simply be dismissed as a subjective unwillingness to comply with the one and only objective meaning of the act. The conflict lies in the objective order and the question arises whether in such a conflict, priority must *always* be given to the end of procreation. The recent *praxis* of the Church seems to answer this question negatively. By permitting the rhythm method under certain conditions, the Church allows the pursuit of the end of love while deliberately excluding the possibility of procreation, as long as the act itself is respected in its physical integrity.

In the light of this answer, Professor Janssens concludes that, in certain circumstances, the use of progesterone for the explicit purpose of excluding procreation, could also be declared licit. Indeed, progesterone merely stops ovulation by putting the ovaries to rest: the act remains intact and the entire mechanism of procreation is respected at least as much as in the rhythm method. "While periodic continence speculates, in the course of each cycle, on the disintegration of the ovum to prevent it from using its reproductive power, progesterone preserves the ova and their reproductive function for the time when the married couple judge that their duty of generous fecundity calls for procreative acts." Progesterone is not really a contraceptive: it entirely respects the reproductive mechanism and merely intervenes in the timing of this mechanism.

SOMEONE might object that the *timing* is part of the total moral object and that, therefore, a deliberate intervention in the timing of the procreative mechanism has a moral impact upon all subsequent acts of intercourse which were intended with it. Professor Janssens would admit this but, as he points out, a deliberate timing of the procreative power does not *necessarily* pervert the morality of the procreative act. Indeed, the practice of rhythm is morally licit, even though it uses the time element *in order to* exclude conception. True enough, the rhythm method does not interfere with the physical course of nature. Yet the time element is an essential part of the intention and thereby undoubtedly enters into the total *moral object* which includes, besides the physical act, the intention and the essential circumstances. "What happens in the practice of rhythm? Procreation is certainly excluded from the intention. But it is also excluded by the choice of the means: the object of the choice is not just any conjugal act, but an act posited precisely and deliberately at a moment expressly chosen because it occurs in a sterile period."

Yet, there remains one point in Professor Janssens' argument which requires further clarification. Why exactly is a deliberate interference with the timing *morally* different from an interference with the mechanism of procreation itself (which takes place in the use of contraceptives)? If the intended time is part of the moral totality of the act, as Professor Janssens admits, one might still ask why a *positive* intervention to regulate the timing of the procreation would morally differ from a positive interference with the mechanism itself. Also, I would be very hesitant to use the *physical integrity* of the marital act as an argument in favor of the pill, for any such consideration tends to isolate the physical aspect of the act from its moral totality, and

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will easily degenerate into the sort of abstract "physicism" from which Professor Janssens is trying to escape. Finally, undue emphasis on the fact that the pill does not interfere with the marital act itself will undoubtedly provoke the reply of many moralists that the distinction between any sort of positive intervention *before* and *during* the act of intercourse is morally negligible, as long as this intervention directly influences the effect of the act.

In raising this difficulty, we by no means imply that such an intervention would *per se* be morally wrong. Nor do we imply that the distinction between pill and contraceptives *is* morally irrelevant. The physiological and psychological differences between the two are so important that they may very well result in an essential moral distinction. We merely say that the last word on the subject has not been spoken, no more, for that matter, than on the liceity of the pill. The present stand of the problem could be summarized in the following statement, made by the Dutch hierarchy in a recent letter: "Even though the oral, chemical means which are now propagated for preventing conception cannot be accepted *as a generally applicable solution*, any more than the instrumental means which have been known for a long time, Catholic morality discusses the question whether the use of these means could be accepted in certain situations." (The words in italics have, strangely, been dropped in two current English translations!)

In the meantime, Professor Janssens has made an important contribution to the discussion by placing the marital act in its total moral context of intention, effect and circumstances, and by showing that this act has two meanings—procreation and expression of love—both of which must be considered in deciding what is morally permissible. We would like to add that, for a moral evaluation, the act itself must be seen in the light of the larger end of *marriage* of which it is a partial realization. The important point, then, is not so much whether the physical integrity of the act, or of the biological mechanism, is preserved, but whether the act is in line with the essential finality of *marriage itself*. One must hereby remember that this finality is twofold: 1) procreation and raising to adulthood of the offspring; 2) mutual fulfilment of the marriage partners. As I have argued in my previous article, the fulfilment of the secondary end is essential for the *complete* fulfilment of the primary, which includes the education of the children: where the love of the parents becomes jeopardized, the education of the children suffers. The question of the physical integrity of the procreative mechanism remains subordinate to the more important one whether the act is in conformity with the end of marriage. In this wider perspective one can unblock some of the problems which are insoluable in a discussion restricted to the isolated act.

While the viewpoint of Professor Janssens has become relatively well-publicized in recent months, an important, but less well-known, article by a Dutch theologian, Father W. Van der Marck, O.P., is worth noting in this context. It appeared in *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* in late 1963.

Father Van der Marck takes his starting point from the evolution which has occurred in moral theology on the transplantation problem. Until ten years ago, transplantation of human organs was judged exclusively in terms of mutilation and, since mutilation is permissible only for the good of one's *own* organism, declared illicit. Yet, gradually a new view developed which grasped the various physical phases of the transplantation process in their intentional totality. Transplantation was no longer seen as an act of mutilation, but was performed in order to make possible a second act of service to one's fellow man. The one good intention unites the successive stages of the process into one moral act.

"It is characteristic," Father Van der Marck writes, "of the human act that the physically distinguished elements can be united by the one meaning-giving purpose. The intention determines what the human act is, not only with respect to its 'purpose,' but also with respect to 'the means.' This implies that in the present case the first intervention, precisely as human act, is already transplantation. For to the extent that this intervention is 'means,' it is determined, as human act, by the end. Consequently, there is no question of mutilation, at least not of intended or 'direct' mutilation. In other words, there is no mutilating action used as a means to aid one's fellow man. There is only transplantation."

A similar judgment, he says, could be made on the use of progesterone for the purpose of birth regulation. In itself birth regulation is a moral good. Yet theologians reject the pill as immoral, because it attains this good

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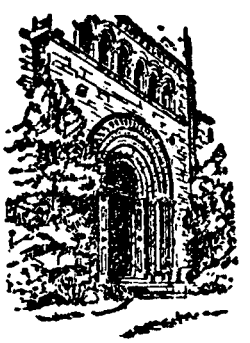

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end *by means* of a previous act of sterilization—which is evil. Father Van der Marck disagrees with this opinion: the moral evaluation of the intervening act depends upon the moral character of the final end toward which the act is directed, and in the case of birth regulation, this end can be good.

Of course, as he points out, the final end could never save the morality of the total act if the use of anovulants were *evil in itself,* for then it would simply justify an immoral means by a good intention. However, he argues, the physical act of using progesterone remains *morally indifferent* until its moral character is determined by the end for which it is to be used. Theologians agree that the use of hormonal compounds for therapeutic purposes is licit. Now, since birth regulation is as much a good as the well-being of the body, there is no reason why anovulants could not be taken for this purpose.

Father Van der Marck objects to the traditional way of posing the problem which reduces all non-therapeutic use of the pill to an act of direct sterilization. To take the pill for the purpose of birth regulation (wherever it is a moral good) is not to posit *first* an illicit act of sterilization and *then* to achieve a good end. The overall intention covers the entire process. If the end is good, the various indifferent acts which lead to it will be good; if the end is bad (for example, through a lack of generosity in achieving the primary end of marriage), the entire process will be evil. The ultimate moral judgment on the pill, then, is the same as that on the rhythm method: the final answer depends on the intention for which the method is used. Such, in brief, is his argument.

Much as one might agree with Father Van der Marck's way of posing the problem, it would seem that some of his implicit assumptions are open to question. He defends the pill for the purpose of birth regulation, while rejecting "contraception" as intrinsically evil. Instead of the traditional disjunction, "the use (of hormonal compounds) is either therapeutic or sterilizing, that is *contraceptive*" (my italics), he offers a third possibility: the use of anovulants for the purpose of a morally licit birth regulation.

BUT WHAT is this "contraception" which is rejected from the outset? The author avoids defining it. In the light of his article I do not see how he could describe it in any way other than: *either* as the use of any means to prevent conception for a purpose that is not morally good, *or* as the use of *mechanical* (as opposed to chemical) means to prevent conception. The second alternative conflicts with his entire theory, since the import of this theory is precisely that the various physical stages are united in the total intention which determines the one human act. The distinction, then, between an intervention *before* and *during* the act of intercourse is no longer morally relevant. Nor can one say that the

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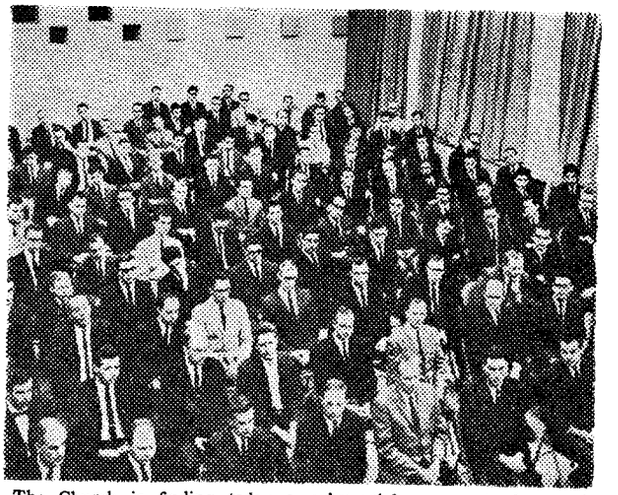

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use of chemical devices is morally indifferent while that of physical contraceptives is not, for the distinction between physics and chemistry is equally irrelevant from a moral viewpoint.

Consequently, to remain consistent with his own theory, Father Van der Marck must take the first alternative: contraception is the use of *any* means which prevent conception, *for a purpose which is not morally good.* But then I fail to see why the author can say that *only* anovulants are permissible for a morally good purpose. What difference can there be between the pill and, for example, a diaphragm, if both are used with the same intention? The fact that anovulants, unlike mechanical devices, *can also* be used for therapeutic purposes does not affect the moral evaluation of their use for the clear purpose of birth regulation. The reasons, then, why Father Van der Marck advocates the pill while rejecting "contraceptives" must be entirely extrinsic to his argument. I can think of no other reason than that mechanical means have been rejected, without qualification, in the encyclical *Casti Connubii,* while the current rejection of anovulants is restricted to their use for the purpose of direct sterilization. Yet, this reason is somewhat surprising for an author who so generously allows for evolution in papal pronouncements.

Father Van der Marck's preference for the pill as opposed to "contraceptives" on the ground that the pill does not interfere with the marital *act itself,* as he explicitly notes in the English summary of his article, is not very consistent with his own argument, and returns to the very division of the human act which he rejects in his article.

My criticism by no means implies that there might not be an essential distinction between pill and "contraceptives," but it merely confirms, as I said in my comments on Janssens, that the distinction has not been sufficiently clarified.

BOOKS

Closing the Gap Between Theology and Marital Reality

The Theology of Marriage. By Joseph Kerns. Sheed & Ward. $6.
The Meaning of Christian Marriage. Edited by Enda McDonagh. Alba House. $4.95.
Love in Marriage. By Henri Gibert, M.D. Hawthorn Books. $4.95.

by Michael Novak

The Theology of Marriage is a study of the historical development of Christian attitudes toward sexuality in marriage. Implicitly, it raises serious problems for those who speak of "the unbroken tradition of the Church" in these matters. For if there is one thing clear about that tradition, at least as it thrived among theologians (they are by no means the whole Church), it is that the theological tradition on marital sexuality has been grievously inadequate and often seriously mistaken.

Father Kerns, who has his doctorate from the Gregorianum and who now is chairman of the theology department at Wheeling College in West Virginia, has done the Catholic people a great service with this study. His study is tentative, uneven, and written with a popular as well as a scholarly audience in mind; great sources like Augustine and obscure moralists never heard of are sometimes quoted side by side. But one of the great values of his method is his utter respect for the tradition as it is lived by laymen. This is a truly revolutionary theological principle, well used.

On the other hand, Father Kerns, like the Catholic theological tradition generally, tries too hard to make a case for virginity. That is not his main intention, and it is plain that he is really trying to construct a case for holiness in marriage. But at one point chapter after chapter is dedicated to listing the disadvantages of being married, under the Christian dispensation. No similar list of chapters details the disadvantages of virginity, also under that dispensation. Father Kerns is able to quote celibate saint after celibate saint who bewails the fact that marriage distracts one from God. St. Jerome writes: "As often as a man renders the debt to his wife he is unable to pray." Besides, marriage involves a couple in each other; this "divides" their affections from God. Etc., etc.

Father Kerns comments on the linking of intercourse to evil or disharmony of soul: "Practically none of the theologians who have written on this question could speak from personal experience. Augustine, on whom they rely so heavily, was admittedly not a celibate at first, but neither was he married. It should not be assumed without proof that the experience of a man and woman who feel they are doing wrong is the same as that of a husband and wife." There is a deeper matter here. One would have thought, from reading the letters of St. John, that God is chiefly to be found in the love of other persons. When one reads the texts of theologians which Father Kerns has collated, however, one gets the impression that they think God is found only in isolation, apart. Many of them list the advantages of the bachelor: lack of care, lack of involvement, lack of contradiction, lack of that interpenetration with another personality which is its own kind of novitiate. Monastic silence and private examinations of conscience can for long years fail to reveal faults which six months of close living with another person will expose. To a Christian, is this a disadvantage in the school of charity?

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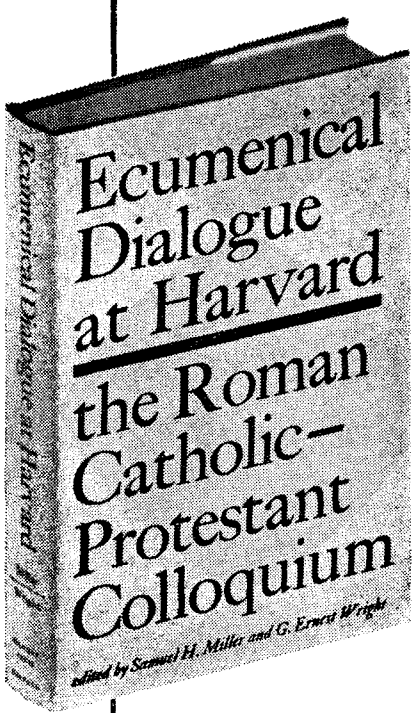
Father Kerns sets out to focus on one question, the efforts husband and wife make to improve each other. He begins with the Old Testament, analyzes briefly the sexual attitudes of the Graeco-Roman culture against which Christianity tried for so many centuries to define itself, and ends, regularly, with Pius XII on marriage and virginity. Father Kerns promises a second volume, and we may hope that he carries his thought into the future, for he seems to have enough momentum from his historical studies to move the tradition well beyond the point at which Pius XII expressed it.

Compared with Graeco-Roman culture, it appears that Jewish culture at the time of Christ had a far more sensible attitude toward sexuality. The flesh is good; a good wife is a man's most precious treasure; salvation is in pairs. The Greeks and Romans, on the other hand, alternately tried to live superior to the flesh and then, weakly, brutally indulged in it. It appears that their womenfolk were treated as less than equals in the sexual act. It is no wonder that sects and movements which denounced sexuality and even marriage as abominable evils would find responsive hearts in the Graeco-Roman world for generations to come. At this point, Father Kerns does not note the potentially dangerous impact of those few words of Christ and of St. Paul about virginity, which could easily be construed as feeding the Graeco-Roman obsession. He does, however, recount the long efforts of Christian bishops to condemn the Graeco-Roman views and come to the defense of sexuality and marriage.

At this juncture, the towering personal character of St. Augustine impressed the lessons of his experience on centuries to come. Venereal pleasure, he decided, was evil in itself; he even linked original sin to it. No other reason could justify intercourse but procreation—and even then, if pleasure was felt, sin was involved. These incredible notions dominated the tracts of the theologians for almost a thousand years. For all these years, as Father Kerns points out, the general practice of Catholic couples was evidently at variance with the moral principles that flow from Augustine's analysis. Most did not read, and certainly did not read Latin. "They lived by their general Catholic instinct and rarely felt the need of anything else . . . And no one told them they were wrong . . . there were no sermons on this theme, no prayers in the liturgy."

Gradually, in the middle ages, theologians tried to come closer to the experience of married Catholics in their teaching. They began to teach that sexual intercourse in marriage is not an evil in itself. Next, that for procreation it was even a good. Next, that it was also a good for the sake of mutual fidelity. The Council of Trent appears to have arrested this development, at least in part. Against Luther's praise of the spiritual values of marriage, the theologians of the Counter Reformation seem to outdo one another in their praise of virginity, and in their insistence on the "slavery" and "chains" of marriage. (A curious fact which Father Kerns does not mention is the role of the discipline of celibacy in heightening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the tensions of the time; violations created scandal; and a very large number of the leaders of the Reform were priests or monks, who married shortly after their conversion.)

Finally, and Father Kerns does not quite open this latest chapter of history, the emergence of reasonably accurate means of birth control in our century has also contributed to arresting the Catholic development, at least on the official level. Contraceptives were first championed by those who were anti-religious. Theologians had not yet worked out a doctrine of the goods of marital sexuality which could separate marital sexuality from fertility, or see marital sexuality as a good in itself. The Church reacted negatively, on the official level.

THIS lack of a positive view of sexuality as a good in itself shows up also in the collection of essays edited by Enda McDonagh as the fruit of the Maynooth Summer School of 1962. The essays are learned, sophisticated in modern biblical studies and theological methods, and smoothly written. The tone and accent are not scholastic or Tridentine, but contemporary. The collection has many good and beautiful things to say about the relation of man and woman—that it is the best analogy for the relation of man and God, for example. But I do not think the book will strike many lay people as relevant to what they know of Catholic marriage.

For marital sexuality has values which the theologians have not yet begun to touch. It unifies the couple; it often restores their spirits and their energies; it heals wounds; it sends out rays of harmony into all the moments of the day; it sets a standard of trust and communion to which they must live up in all their other actions; it nourishes, judges, and expresses their mutual bond.

Nevertheless, the theologians continue to justify marital sexuality chiefly in terms of procreation. Even Father Bernard Häring, who contributes an essay on "Community of Love," sees "procreative openness" as the only safeguard against "egoism between two." It simply is not true, as a matter of fact, that only when

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they can have children are a married couple expressing community of love rather than "egoism between two." Even when they cannot have children, they are reasonably capable of distinguishing between love and lust, communion and egoism. They may sin by egoism; but they may not. Openness to having children is not a sufficient criterion.

This point becomes clear when Father McDonagh turns to the situation of the childless or sterile couple. "They should not regard the sexual act as merely a way of pleasure without any responsibility toward life, but as an expression of their own complete giving to each other and so serving and enlarging their own lives." But of course! This is exactly what any married couple tries to do, in those marital acts when, for one reason or other, they know they are not open to having children.

It seems that the difficulty in these questions arises from fear of what ungenerous persons will do if some artificial means of fertility control is approved. But the couples who are presently suffering under the discipline of the Church are the generous ones, who are not looking for "a way out." (In our society, that is easy.) They see that, in fact, sexuality is not related to fertility. They desire children—almost everybody does. But they see that sexuality also has many other roles to play in their marriage besides procreation. And at certain times, under modern conditions, they positively do not want to have children. They do not think it is egoism which leads them to desire intercourse during those times. Intercourse is good for its own sake. They are waiting for theologians—and bishops—to say so.

IN *Love in Marriage,* Dr. Gibert has written a beautiful and profound book, from a layman's point of view, about the complexities of human sexuality and love. The language is poetic but simple and dignified. The attitude is warm and ardent. The viewpoint is integrated: there is no gap between "the spirituality" and "the facts." It appears that Dr. Gibert has absorbed certain values into his own life, and they express themselves as a whole and without ar-

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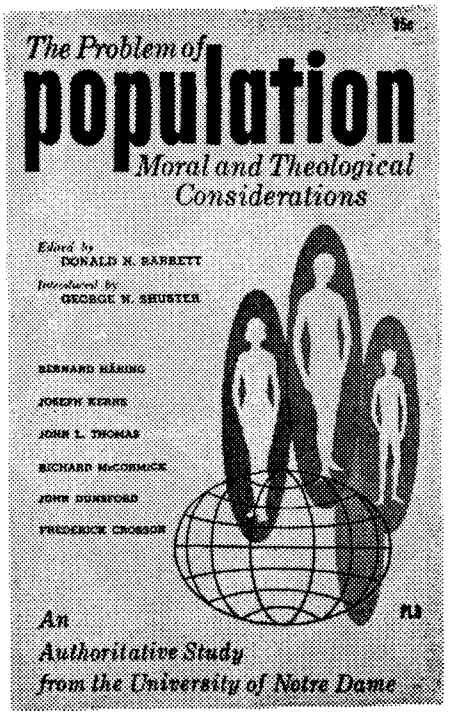

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tificiality. It has taken, perhaps, Latin temperament and French intelligence to prepare such a book.

Dr. Gibert keeps constantly in mind the fact that the whole human being is involved in whatever concept a man forms regarding sex, "for the sex instinct with all the emotional powers bound up in it not only constitutes the mainstream of our personality but is also the most powerful actuator of most human undertakings." It is in marriage that two persons bring their concept of sex, and the whole "mainstream of their personalities," into possibly terrible and dangerous contact.

Dr. Gibert cites the Kinsey report as showing "what was already known through experience; namely that sexual harmony between two human beings is difficult to attain, a long and exacting work seldom completed, and a precarious accord subject to ever possible discords." Again, "human sex differs radically from . . . carnal egotism." Still again: "human sex differs in essence from that of the animal, and . . . even on biological grounds alone there can be no denial of the spiritual aspect in the union of man and woman." On these principles, a realistic theology of marriage might slowly be built up. For here at last we are getting mention of the depths of spirit involved in marital sexuality. We see that the symbol of union sets a standard to which the couple must constantly strive to measure up. It is difficult to use that symbol well. It is easy to do each other harm. Marriage is a spiritual adventure of the highest order, even in its ordinariness. It is no place for the selfish.

Dr. Gibert has chapters on education in sexual love, from infancy onwards, which are excellent. The chapters on courtship and early marriage suffer too much from European ideas of the differences between man and woman: man the conqueror, bold, clumsy, honest; the frail, spiritual woman to be conquered, sensitive, delicate. He notes that half or more of married women do not find sexual satisfaction in marriage; aside from ignorance, it appears that one of the reasons for this frightful situation must be the cultural role he himself expects women to play in

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sexuality. For it seems clear that a woman can obtain far more pleasure from marital sexuality than a man, if she is not falsely inhibited and if her husband is knowledgeable and concerned. In such mutual knowledge and concern there is much joy and inner unity. The woman must take the man, as he her, for the symbol to be complete.

The most inadequate part of Dr. Gibert's book is the second part, on the physical aspects of love. He offers very little help to the inexperienced young husband or wife who, for example, realize that the wife requires more attention, but does not know what to do. He mentions that clitoral stimulation is "supremely important" but such advice will only mystify the uninitiated, unless more detail is given. Such detail would be a Godsend to many people: for it was apparently God's idea in the first place.

The chapter on masturbation will probably go a long way in relieving the impossible and stupid pressures put on young American Catholics, eighty-five percent of whom may be presumed to be struggling with the problem, with so little wise instruction. That might help clear up many of the prejudices and wrong ideas about "male drive" which are brought into marriage. The chapter on continence in marriage is wise and sound; there are many times when a married couple must be continent. But the almost perpetual continence in which today some are forced to live is not justified in that chapter. Nor is the chapter on rhythm very detailed, realistic, or encouraging.

In the end, we must say that Dr. Gibert is only the best voice yet heard in speaking for the tradition as it has come into our hands. It is an admirable voice. The book is a good one for young couples about to be married but they will need to know a great deal more. Finally, when towards the end of his book Dr. Gibert begins to say that "intercourse is not an end in itself," he appears to be using the word "intercourse" in a narrower sense than he did earlier. His main argument for continence and the rhythm method depends on that change of meaning.

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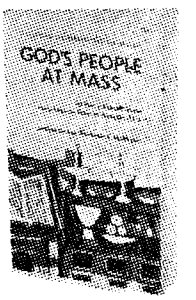

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